



JOHN NORTH IN MEXICO

FRED A.
OBER.



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JOHN NORTH IN MEXICO

A STORY OF

THE SILVER CITY

BY

FRED A OBER.

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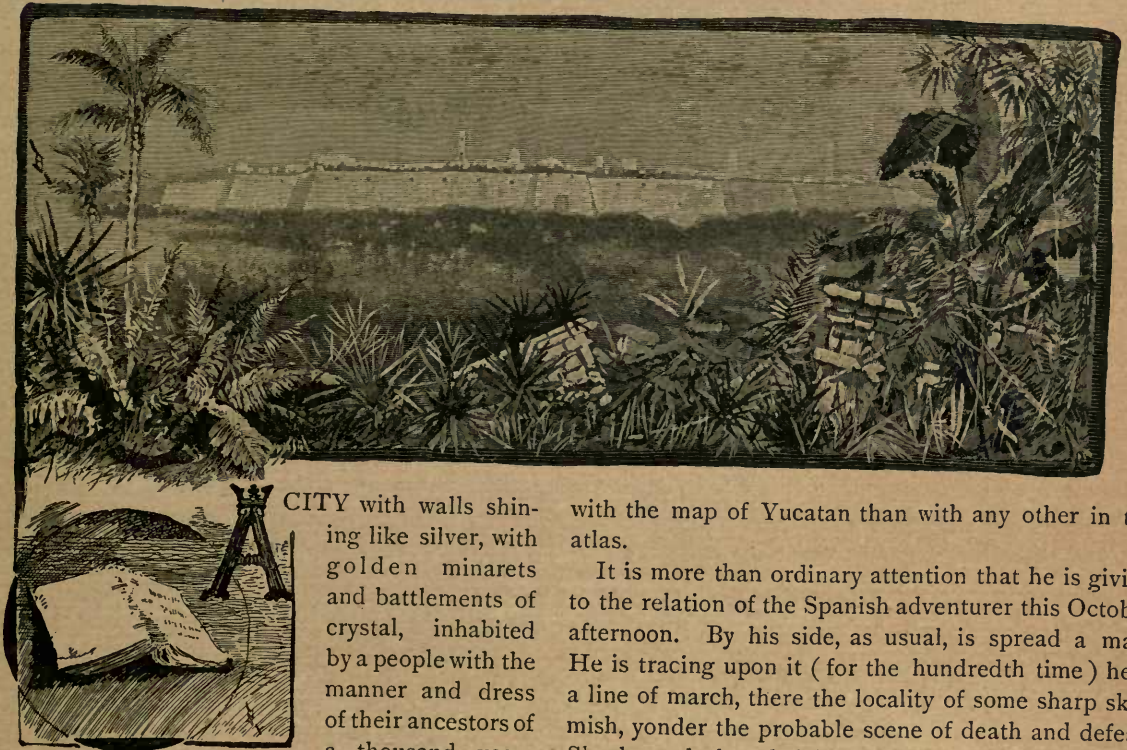
JOHN NORTH IN MEXICO.

(A Story of the Silver City.)

PART II.

MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES.

CHAPTER I.—WRECKED ON A CORAL REEF.



guarding a subterranean treasure-chamber holding more gold than the Spaniards took from the Incas of Peru!

This was the luring phantom that had taken possession of John North, a New England boy nineteen years old, coast born and farm bred.

It all came about from his reading *that old book*. No one knew how or when it came into the North farm garret; but everybody in the village of Selim knew that it was there, and that it had charmed and infatuated here a young man and there an old one for at least three generations. John North, when he came to reading days, found it there in company with the Voyages of Captain Cook, and kindred books. He had read it through at least once a year ever since he could remember; and he was far more familiar

with the map of Yucatan than with any other in the atlas.

It is more than ordinary attention that he is giving to the relation of the Spanish adventurer this October afternoon. By his side, as usual, is spread a map. He is tracing upon it (for the hundredth time) here a line of march, there the locality of some sharp skirmish, yonder the probable scene of death and defeat. Slowly and thoughtfully he turns page after page, collating, and constantly recurring to the map, picking up different points like an Indian on the trail of a foe. At last he seems to have found the object of his search; his finger circles around the figure of a lake in the centre of a region of forest, gradually approaches it, and finally is brought down with a triumphant thump.

"That's it! the very place! Hurrah! I surely have found it this time!"

"*What* have you found, my boy?" said a soft voice behind him; turning around, he saw his mother standing in the doorway.

"Found! Why, that mysterious city we boys have always wondered about so much in reading this old book. Look, mother! here it is, here it must be, right in the midst of this great forest! As true as you live, mother, here's the spot where Cortes hung

the Aztec emperor; here where the army nearly all perished in crossing the river; here is the lake with its lovely island where the Indians made an image of a horse of the Spaniards and worshipped it as a god; and here, right down in this big wilderness, must be that city of temples and palaces no white man has ever seen, but which I am determined to discover!"

Despite his bold words, he half caught his breath, and but glanced at his mother as he made this announcement.

Mrs. North reached out and took the book. She held it close, looking earnestly at her son. "This *wicked old book!*" she exclaimed at last, laying it down. "Its spell must be on me too, or I should have burned it years and years ago, before my boys could read. John, listen to me. I have never told you, but this very book laid its spell upon your father before you were born; he was always talking of that 'mysterious city.' John, they believe his ship was wrecked, or burned, but I never did. What I firmly believe is that your father secretly sailed for those dangerous regions of which no man knew anything for certain, and there lost his life. I have never spoken of this, but, John, you surely are old enough now to hear it, and to be warned by it too."

John seemed to consider his mother's earnest words in a sort of astonished silence.

"Mother," he said at last, "if I really believed this — yes, if even *you* really believe it, there is all the more reason for my carrying out my plan. For mother, you may as well know it now as at any time, and get used to it" — and the smile was as tender as bright which flashed all over his face — "I really have resolved to go."

"My boy, when you are making such wild plans, do you ever consider that you are only nineteen? Such a step at such a time of life may prove your ruin. You will return, if you return at all" —

"Older men than I have been in search of this city," interrupted John.

"Yes, yes," said his mother, "but have never returned."

"That was because they were not well-informed. They had not studied the matter in detail as I have. If only I had the two missing leaves of this book! Mother, I feel sure that from what goes before and comes after, that those leaves would locate the city for me to a dot; and now, mother, look at this matter with me reasonably. I am sure that I never will be fit to undertake anything else until I have disposed

of this matter. I am perfectly sure of success. I am not a dreaming boy, mother. I cannot only make plans, but I can manage them step by step. What if I tell you that I have found a man, a cool-headed, scientific man, too, who has such faith in me that he is quite willing to advance me money on certain work that I am to do for him; if I do that I can start at once. Shall I read you this letter?"

Mrs. North drew a long breath. John looked pained, too, as he gazed down at his delicate little mother, and noted how she turned her pale face away from his glance.

"Come down into the sitting-room," she said. "I should like to call in uncle David to hear this letter read."

Left sprawling upon the floor where it had been dropped, lay the wizard book, the cause of such an upheaval in the North household. It was bound in parchment, and bore upon its back, printed in great gilt letters: "THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO; by *One of the Conquerors.*" An innocent title enough; but lying behind it was a narrative of strange incidents and deeds of valor and records of great guarded treasures, so vividly



THE OLD BOOK IN THE ATTIC.

written that its influence upon its readers, boys especially, was wonderful, bewitching.

It lay now in the dusty sunshine, glaring up at the rafters with its glittering eyes.

"I will be picked up again soon enough — never mind," it seemed to say. "I am not at all disturbed. I am perfectly sure of my prey."

At first glance it would seem that a more unlikely place for a romance could not be found on the whole New England coast than this old North farm with its gray moss-flecked house,



THE OLD NORTH FARM.

settled down in an orchard of apple-trees; yet from beneath the gable roofs of just such weather-beaten dwellings have come forth the world's hardest adventurers; for to boys there, of all places in the world, comes the leisure of long solitary winter evenings to read books and dream dreams; and was there ever a dream so likely to set on fire a boy's brain as this one of the possible discovery of a grand, beautiful treasure city deep buried in a tropical forest of Central America?

Some ten years before this momentous October day, the father of John North, a brave young seacaptain, had sailed away to the South, leaving his family on the small coast farm. After three years of waiting, Mrs. North acquiesced in the neighborhood belief that his ship and all hands had gone down, although she refused to "put on black."

As soon as her two boys were half-grown, they had been taken from school and set at work. In summer they worked on the farm, and made an occasional fishing-trip down the bay; and in winter they hunted and trapped. They were now grown into strong and sturdy boys. John was two years the senior of Ben, now seventeen, and though slender, was of good height, and in perfect health, agile, and quick as a young panther, and bound to accomplish whatever he undertook. Though taken so early from school, he had clung to his books, and, during the long winter evenings, he had gone, more or less meditatively, over a wide range of reading.

From a book, found also in the garret, he had learned the art of preserving birds, and during odd hours he had collected and stuffed all the most interesting birds of the coast. One study leads to

another, and in order to learn the names of the birds he shot, he sought books on natural history and travel. Thus his mind developed in several extraordinary directions, until he felt that the quiet little world in which he had lived so long was but a chimney-corner; that there was a beautiful, wonderful unknown world outside; and he grew restless to go, and ripe for the bursting forth of some romantic plan like this search for the Silver City.

The past summer had been an eventful one. He had met on one of his hunting trips, an ornithologist who, like himself, was in pursuit of specimens. He proved to be a famous naturalist whom John knew well by reputation; and he in his turn became interested in the young enthusiast of the New England woods, and saw at once his value in certain important plans of his own.

The letter which John carried down to read in the sitting-room was from him. Even "Uncle David," the shrewd neighbor who generally assisted in their family councils, could not deny that it was straight to the point, and all that an adventurous boy could ask:

WASHINGTON, October 13, 18—.

MY DEAR JOHN:—In regard to the matter on which we have corresponded, I am now ready to say that I place three hundred dollars at your disposal, inclosing you a check for the same. With this money I wish you to do all that is possible towards securing the institution with which I am connected a collection of the birds of Yucatan. You will, I hope, do your utmost to procure a complete representation of its *fauna*—

"Arn't those summat dangerous animals?" interrupted uncle David. "And you a-knowin' little of their habits, bein' furren as it were."

"Uncle David, *fauna* isn't an animal, it's only a word meaning the animal life of a country — all the animals."

"Wuss yit, if it means the hull on 'em," said uncle David, with a decisive shake of the head.

John smiled reassuringly and continued:

"The professor goes on to say that he wants two of each kind of the birds of Yucatan, and will give me a dollar apiece for their skins. So you see this three hundred dollars is only part payment in advance. Now, what do you think of it? Any young fellow ever had a better chance?"

A long silence followed. It was broken at last by uncle David. "Well, John, you know what I think pretty well. You know I think New England farms need New England boys, an' 'll pay 'em too, if they'll only stick by. All the same, no discontented young

feller's going to plow deep, or take much int'rest in importin' stock. You're teched, an' you'll go, prob'ly. So we might as well say go, an' good luck go with ye. I feel better about it that you're goin' under the protection of an institoot as it were, an' for a def'nit object; so much apiece for a skin, as it were, an' not a huntin' as you've sometimes talked, for that city of moonshine, with silver walls."

John smiled. "That is the funniest part of it," he said; "for, uncle David, if you'll believe it, this region the professor has pitched upon to have me explore is the very one containing that mysterious city. Come, now, isn't that a clear indication of Providence?"

Uncle David's brow lowered, and his mouth twitched as it always did when he was much disturbed by something he could not change, but he made no reply.

"Let me make one more appeal," said his mother; "I want to make you this offer. Here is the farm, it has thirty acres of good land, and you and Ben shall have it to yourselves; all you can make upon it from this day, this season's crops and all, if you will stay and work it faithfully for five years. I'll deed it to you to-morrow on these conditions."

Ben broke in eagerly: "And I have something to say, John: if you'll do as mother proposes — *you shall have my share too*; the whole farm shall be yours — I'll be content to simply be your hired man, if you'll only stay at home, John."

John shook his head, though his eyes filled with warm tears.

"Then," continued his brother, the glow dying away on his honest face, "I will stay and work mother's farm alone. You save all you can, we'll do the same; return to us in a twelvemonth and let us compare notes. I will put the farm against the sea and the Silver City."

"All right, old fellow," said John cheerily, springing up. "None of you believe in me, of course, but when I come home with money enough to pay the village debt and buy out uncle David beside, you'll admit that I dreamed dreams to some purpose."

It was difficult to find a vessel going to that part of the world John wished to reach, especially one that would either take out a passenger for a small sum, or let one work his passage, as he proposed doing. This country of Yucatan was a long way off, especially to John's mother and Ben. Every day now they looked at it on an atlas; it lay south and west of

Cuba, projecting upward from Central America. At that time but few vessels sailed to it direct; the only chance seemed to secure a passage to Cuba and there await some coasting vessel.

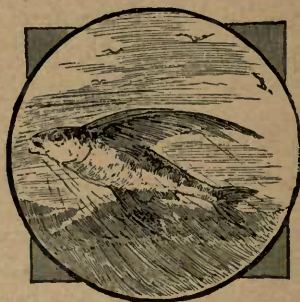
But good luck still seemed to come to John. It was not a week before there might have been seen a schooner in Selim harbor with sails loose hung to the breeze, toward which uncle David's dory was being rowed, two sturdy young men at the oars. Half an hour later, the sails were drawn aft, the schooner was trimmed to the wind, and the little dory left behind, its occupants gazing seaward tearfully, the one they had left on board looking landward with straining eyes.

The spires of the town, the rocky headlands, the smooth beaches, gradually faded from sight; the little brown house sank down amongst the trees, and then John turned away and set his face toward the Silver City.

By the time the new sailor had stowed away his luggage and donned sea-clothes, the sunset was gilding a distant cloud bank; all that remained in sight of his native land. Midnight found them tossing upon the long waves of the open ocean, two thousand miles between John and his destination.

The *Dappled Diver* was a stanch craft, though small and old, of about one hundred tons' capacity; and as she sailed along steadily, requiring very little "handling," the young sailor, though he shared both night and day watches, found time heavy on his hands.

The ship's crew and officers promised no great variety of interesting acquaintanceship. Captain Bowker was a "down easter," a native of that vague country located anywhere along the New England coast. His mate was a connection, and the cook a brother of his wife, so that the discipline aboard the *Dappled Diver* was rather lax, especially as the four men constituting the crew were also from the captain's own neighborhood. Of a kind disposition, he soon treated his new "hand" as he might his own son. He became interested in his plans, gave him advice, and steadily discouraged



FLYING FISH.

his idea of setting off into the interior of Yucatan.

"Your project of exploring all along the coast," said he, "is safe enough, if you are tolerable cautious; but once you get fifty miles inland, you leave



SEA GULL.

the region of towns and cities where the people are kind and peaceable, and you fall into the hands of savages who don't show any mercy to strangers, but put 'em to death with all kinds of torture."

"But it happens that the portion of Yucatan I want to

explore most is a long ways inland, in a region so wild no white man has ever been known to penetrate it and yet return to describe it."

"And what's your idea of going there?"

John colored up. He knew the reception his pet scheme would meet with from this bluff sailor. But he came out boldly: "Well, there is said to be somewhere in the wild interior a large and populous city with" —

"Yes, yes; bless your heart," broke in the captain, "I know all about it—with walls shining like silver, with golden minarets and battlements of crystal, where the people have all the ways and costumes of their ancestors of a thousand years ago, and where they guard a subterranean treasure-chamber containing more gold than the Spaniards got from Montezuma."

"That is it, truly," admitted the astonished young man; "but where did you get that description?"

"Oh, I've seen *that old book*; and what's more, it was nearly the means of leading me off on just such a trip as you are thinking of now, only I had the resolution to fight it. There was one poor fellow, though, who wa'n't so fortunate. He sailed a schooner—the mate to mine—built on the same stocks and launched the same season, and though only a few know it, I know that he actually went down there to hunt that city."

"How long ago was it, and what became of him?" asked John.

"Nigh on to ten years ago, I reckon, and as to what became of him, nobody ever knew; but it is supposed that he sailed down towards Honduras,

and was wrecked off that coast somewhere. Some of the sailors, it is said, reached the shore, but they were took by the Indians and killed."

"Then you *do* know what became of him" — He stopped abruptly, the blood almost standing still around his heart. "Captain, do you remember his name?"

"I don't exactly. You see, I was never intimate with him; only see his schooner now and then, and hardly ever within hailing distance. But it seems to me that they called him—let me see—Cap'n North; yes, that was it, I think. Halloo, halloo, what's the matter?" for John had seized him by the shoulder.

John smiled faintly as he sat down again. "My father was lost at sea about ten years ago," he said, "and my mother believes he went to look for this city. I think it is the same man, and, Captain Bowker, he *may* not be dead, if there is nothing sure known about the shipwreck."

"This is strange; how things do come about!" said the captain. And then he shook his head. "My boy, there isn't the faintest show of his being alive now. Don't let that lead you into that old Yucatan wilderness."

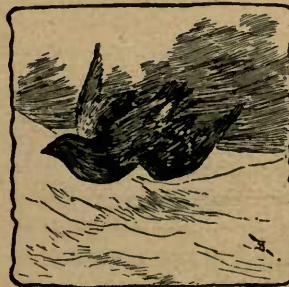
John said not a word. Deep down in his heart was forming the resolve to reach that region, and never to leave it till he had found out the whole truth.

The captain seemed to divine his thoughts. He was about to speak, when something skyward caught his eye. "Look at that cloud!" he cried; "there's a squall, sure's you're born. All hands shorten sail! lively now!"

It proved something more serious than a squall, the wind blowing before night with fury, and the sea running higher than John at least had ever seen it.

For several days the gale kept after them, sending the little craft along at a speed that shortened the voyage by nearly a week.

But at last there came again pleasant weather, and the vessel sailed along on even keel wafted onward by the trade winds. One of



PETREL.

those pleasant days, when the sun shone and the flying-fish and dolphins were playing about the bows, two weeks out, they entered the "Horse Latitudes."

They sailed slowly through vast stretches of gulf weed, like those which frightened Columbus and his sailors. The wind weakened so that they hardly moved ahead: it was several days before they left a-stern this famous "Sargasso Sea." The water assumed a deeper hue as they sailed southward, and from out the cool depths of blue darted the beautiful flying-fish, skimming the waves and glancing like silver in the sun—a sight to delight our young naturalist.

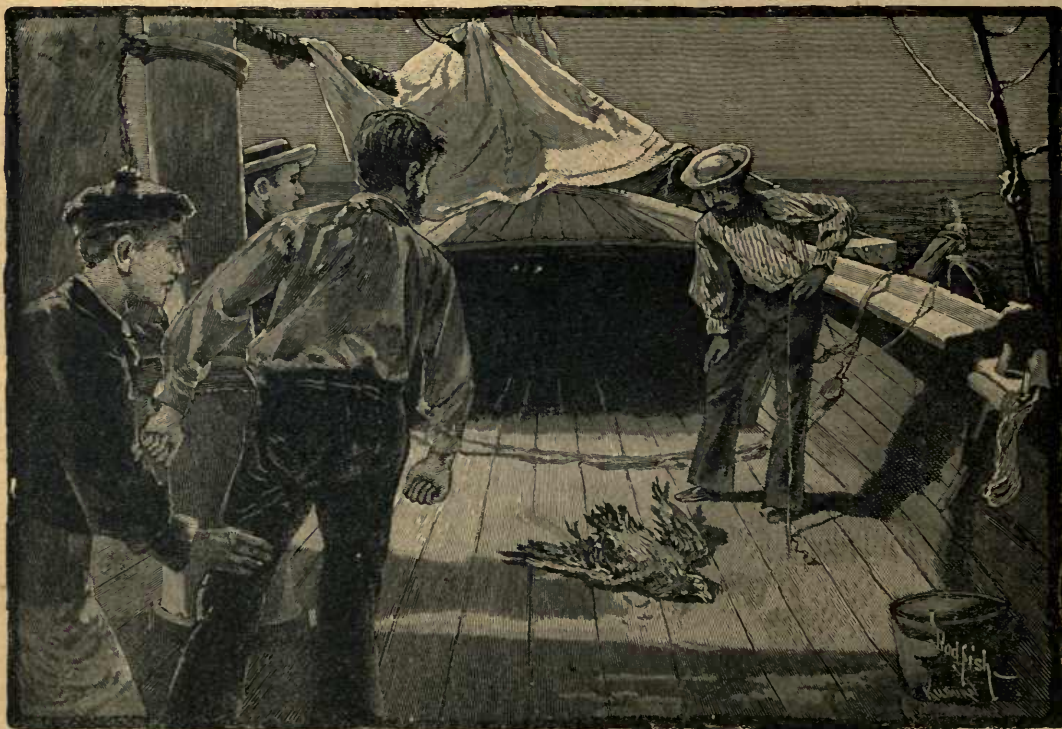
"There ain't no end to the sights you'll see once we fairly enter the tropics," said the mate, enjoying his enthusiasm. "Walkin' in them tropic forests is

a round red face and twinkling black eyes. The whole crew liked him, but they did detest his cooking; his pastry was something horrible, and "plum duff" day, which is usually looked forward to with expectancy, always caused a thrill of horror to run through the crew of the *Diver*.

"Tom," repeated the mate, "trot out that poim."

But Tom with a big blush under John's kindly but keen gaze, said he had other fish to fry, and turned a deaf ear to the mate's commands.

As he turned out next morning John was surprised at the swarms of sea birds flying along with the vessel;



BAD LUCK COMES TO THE "DAPPLED DIVER."

jest like goin' through the 'Arabian Nights,' somethin' that's scrumptious hoppin' up at every step. There's subjects for a poit, every time. Tom, here, 's a dabster at a poim. Now there was a accident happened to the *Diver* last v'yage, and Tom, the cook here, he jest went to work and slung off some of the tallest kind of poitry about it. Tom, what did you do with that poim?"

Tom was a hardy young "down easter" about Ben's age, who had charge of the galley and did the cooking—a jolly good-natured boy, short and fat, with

gulls and terns, sea swallows, frigate-pelicans and tropic birds, diving and wheeling in the clear ether, while flocks of petrels, or "Mother Cary's chickens," floated on the waves astern.

"They's curi's critters," remarked the mate as they hung over the rail looking at the "chickens" skimming the sea and darting at the galley refuse thrown over by the cook; "and they have a way of appearin' and disappearin' that there ain't nobody can account for. They're an evil bird, let me tell you, and though I've seen millions of 'em in my life, I'd no more dare

harm one than I would the spirit of my grandma'am. I've known more'n one occasion when the ketchin' of one has brought bad luck to a vessel."

A cry forward just then called them that way, and running up they found that one of the sailors in a spirit of mischief had caught one of the little creatures, and was hauling it in, fluttering and struggling, at the end of a line. He had just got it in his hands as they reached him, and with a sudden jerk broke its neck and flung it to the deck at their very feet.

For a moment the mate stood dazed; then with a cry of rage he darted at the sailor, who turned in time to evade him and rush up the shrouds.

"You cub! if I ketch you on déck within twenty-four hours, I'll serve you as you've served this bird! Just you stay there in the riggin' till I tell ye to come down! We're in for it now sure; I'm as sartin something will happen to us before the v'yage is ended, as that the sun will set this night."

As the mate thus spoke his great breast heaved and the perspiration stood on his brow. All on board, from the captain to the cook, shared in the feeling of depression. Immediately that their companion had been killed, the petrels had disappeared just as though the sea had opened and swallowed

"Rats leave a sinking vessel," muttered the captain, "and Mother Cary's chickens always skip away when a vessel's bound for bad luck. However, we're within two days of Cienfuegos, and if we don't have it contrary within forty-eight hours, we're all right."

The *Dappled Diver* was bound for the port named, on the south coast of Cuba, there to load with sugar and molasses for New York. The captain's plan was to get into the Caribbean Sea, as he had, and, after passing south of the Bahamas, and between Cuba and Hayti, to sail westerly until in about the longitude of the port, and then bear up for it. By this means he took advantage of the rather strong current setting up from the Caribbean into the Gulf of Mexico. He was now approaching the point whence to change their course to the northward, and, late in the afternoon, after getting the longitude, he told the mate that at midnight they would point the *Diver's* nose for Cienfuegos.

As the sun went down, and as the cook called them below for supper, the mate directed attention to the sky in the west, which had taken on a hard, brassy glare, while the intervening sea was black as ink. The vessel had been sailing an easy jog all day, but now the wind became baffling, and she was already tossing uneasily on the restless waves.

"I don't like it," said the captain, as he and the mate and John went in. "The barometer's falling fast. Soon's we're through, Mr. Walker, better have the men clew up them topsails, and double-reef the mainsail."

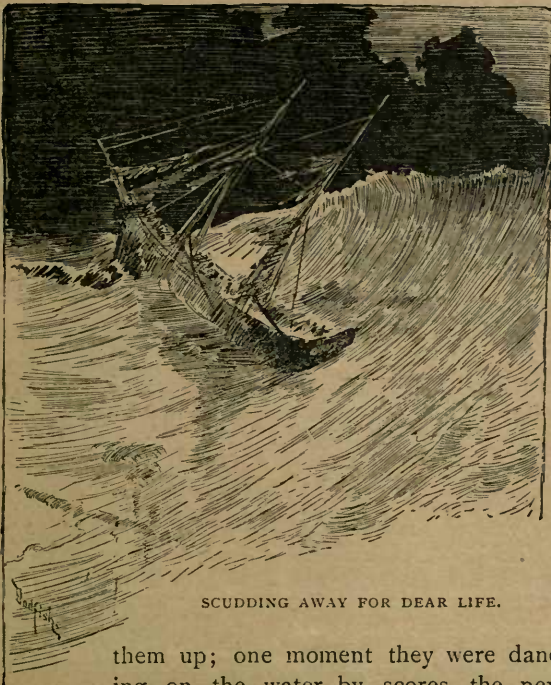
But there was to be no supper that night. *Bang!* a loud report sounded overhead. The vessel heeled till the water came running in at the lee scupper. The captain and mate were out in an instant.

"Guess we won't have to clew up that fore-topsail, cap'n, for there 'tis hangin' in tatters. We're struck fearful!" cried the mate.

The captain ran to the wheel, and, as he took it from the man on duty, shouted hurriedly:

"Run up aloft and take in what's left of the main-topsail! Come aft, two of you, by the main halliards. There! hold on hard; there she comes! Now go ahead and put in a double-reef in the mainsail. Lively, now, our lives depend on't!"

All the other sails were clewed up tight; then, under a rag of the mainsail and the flying-jib, she was put before it, and scud away for dear life, with a hurricane howling behind her.



SCUDDING AWAY FOR DEAR LIFE.

them up; one moment they were dancing on the water by scores, the next and there was not one in sight!

After the ropes had been gathered up and everything made snug, the captain gave up the wheel to John (as it was his watch from eight o'clock to midnight) and went below to consult charts and barometer.

"It's a hurricane, sure as guns," said the mate as he came aft to coil up a rope. "Where we are now is right on the edge of the hurricane region, and we'll be sure to git enough of it in the next two days."

Captain Bowker found he had five hundred miles between them and the nearest land to westward, and as the gale was after them from the eastward, there was no alternative but to let her drive westward. It was a terrible night, but the next morning brought no relief, for the wind was blowing the tops off the white-crested waves, and whistling dismally through the rigging.

The day passed. Night again fell upon a stormy sea. The next day saw them still driving before the unabated fury of the storm. The blackness of the third night was only relieved by flashes of foam and the glare of lightning through an inky sky. The crew were wet through, and hungry and weary with watching. For the past forty-eight hours they had only snatched a moment's sleep where they happened to fall in their clothes.

A new cause of anxiety now harassed the captain. Having been driven so long to westward, they must now be very near the coast that lay five hundred miles to leeward when the gale struck. They had been speeding along at a rate not less than ten miles an hour, possibly twelve, and it needed no deep reasoning to show that most imminent danger waited

just ahead. Long and anxiously the mate and captain debated what it was best to do.

"We can only let her drive," muttered the captain despairingly, "and put our trust in the God of storms. To-morrow will show us where we are, and the wind may then be blown out."

They were running under bare poles; most of their sails were torn into ribbons. Everything movable had been swept from the deck. The man on watch and the helmsman were lashed to their posts. No fire had been lighted for two days. Only hard-tack and raw bacon had been their food.

This was their condition on that third black night of storm. The sun went down in a cloud, and the lights in the rigging struggled feebly with the midnight darkness. The wind wailed and shrieked, the sea roared and bellowed like a hundred lions chasing the fleeing vessel to their dismal dens. Like a flying fish before the jaws of a dolphin, she still sped on. At last above the roar of the storm came a hoarse cry—the long-expected cry from the man at the bow—"Breakers ahead!"

There was nothing to do. The trembling craft dashed right on, leaped high into the clashing waves, sank upon the rocks.

A mighty billow came thundering along with flecks of foam dripping from its jaws; it hung, crouched, one moment above those helpless souls; another, and it fell; the next, and there was not a living thing in sight.

AFTER THE HURRICANE.

CHAPTER II.



DON PEDRO PINTO, Mexican fisherman on the coast of Yucatan, lived in a small hut on the border of Lake Santa Cruz, in the island of Cozumel. He had dwelt solitary on this island for nearly three years, holding little or

no communication with either white men or Indians.

The fearful hurricane that had blown across his island preventing him from going to sea for fish and turtles for the past three days, had now died away. Sweet was the air of the forest with odors of a thousand flowers and vines, and bright shone the sun on the waves at the mouth of the bay as he drew his canoe from under its shelter of palm branches and pushed it over the silver sand that bordered the water. Placing in it his net and lines, his turtle peg, some provisions and water, he paddled slowly out from shore, Indian fashion, facing the bows.

This is perhaps the loveliest lake to the eye that lies in any island of that western Caribbean Sea. It is about two miles in length, and a mile in width, its deep pearl-blue water circled by a belt of snow-white sand, and enclosed by a wall of forest trees displaying all the varied beauty of the tropic wilderness.

Standing at his door, Don Pedro could view its entire length and breadth; could see at a glance the myriads of sea-birds that hovered over its surface, and the black forms of deer and wild hogs that roamed the beach on the other side. These, his only neighbors, did not disturb his meditations that morning as he paddled easily down towards the point where the lake connected with the sea, now hidden by great abrupt cliffs. As he rounded this promontory the roaring of the sea broke upon his ears, telling him that though the storm had subsided, the waters of the ocean had not, and his little canoe

presently began to toss lightly upon water agitated by the rolling waves outside. He saw that he could not venture in his frail craft; that his fishing must be confined to the lake.

Looking about for a choice spot, something beneath the cliff at the farther wall of the narrow entrance arrested his attention.

"*Santa Maria!*" muttered he in Spanish, his mother tongue. "*Santa Maria!* that looks like a good boat for me."

Swiftly plying his paddle, he was soon alongside it, indulging in the prospect of now being able to go turtling in any weather, since so large and strong a boat as this appeared to be, had been cast up especially for him by the waves. Reaching over to grasp the rail, his eye fell on an object lying across a thwart that caused him to exclaim in horror, and cross himself. "Ah! Mother of Mercy! There's a poor boy who must have perished in last night's gale."

Clambering into the boat, he found an oar lashed inside, and with this he brought his capture up the bay near his hut. Running the boat upon the sand, he gently lifted out its occupant, bore him up the bank beneath a palm-tree, and softly laid him down.

"*Pobrecito!* poor little one!" exclaimed he in pity. "To think thou art so young! To think that thou should be borne ashore only to be buried! Thou seem'st a gentle lad, and might have been *bon camarado* with poor Don Pedro!"

He sat down beside the boy. He took one of his hands, and scanned the pallid face from which the dark hair fell away wet and heavy.

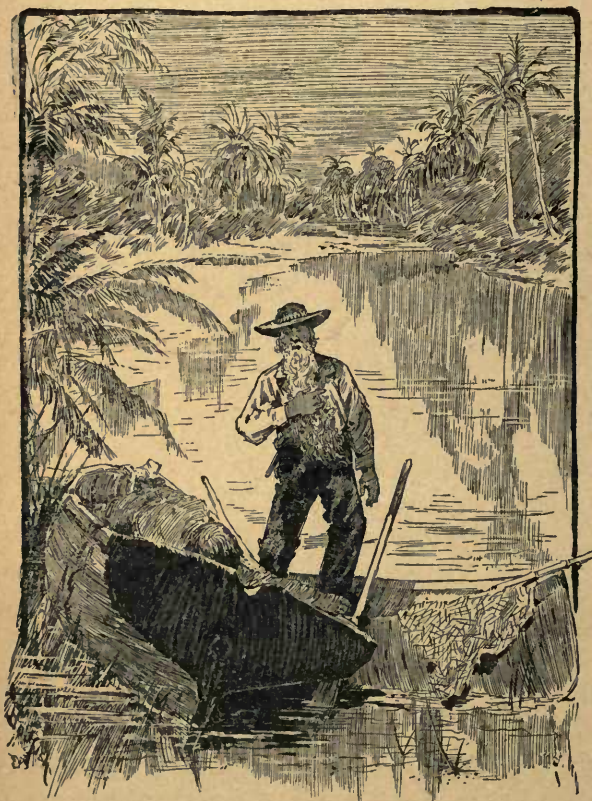
"As though he might be asleep," he muttered. "It is strange his eyes should be closed. When people are drowned their eyes are always open. How many have I looked into, staring wide at me from the waves! And his hand, it is not very cold; it is all but warm. Do I dare think he is alive? It is not possible; yet I can fancy that his eyelids move. Ah, *Dios, they do move!*"

Don Pedro wasted no more time in words. He

flew to his hut for restoratives. There could be no assistance, no advice. But Don Pedro needed none. He knew the very moment when a flush of color should come into the cheeks; he could time the faint gasps of breath; he paused for the slow opening of the great brown eyes that looked up into his so wonderingly — as though for the first time they were gazing upon the world. Then the eyelids drooped, and a deep sleep fell at once upon the boy.

"All is right," murmured Don Pedro.

He proceeded at once to remove him to his own



"AH! MOTHER OF MERCY!"

bed of moss and palm leaves; to take off his wet clothes, and wrap him in warm garments.

Soon the brown eyes opened once more; this time a troubled soul looked through, sorely perplexed. The pale lips framed a question:

"Are you my father?"

Now Don Pedro though he spoke only Spanish and the language of Yucatan, had often visited the English settlement of Belize, and understood much of the English tongue. It was an uncertain idea that this strange voice now conveyed to him, yet after

some thought he grasped and understood the question; but he could not reply in English. Taking the feeble hand in his, he answered slowly in his own language:

"*Si, su padre!*" — yes, I *am* your father.

"He has been given to me by the sea," reasoned the fisherman. "He shall henceforth be my son. So I *am* his father."

But a look of doubt deepened on the lad's face. Don Pedro saw he had not been understood. He bowed his head upon his hands and murmured a touching prayer:

"*Padre mio*, I beseech thee give me a language that can be comprehended by this my son, given to me by the sea!"

There was a common language at command. Unconsciously, Don Pedro gave expression to it in the strong grasp of his hand and the tender light that played on his usually grave and sad face. The boy understood. He felt a father's protection.

"Where am I?" was his next question.

After pondering awhile, Don Pedro answered with careful distinctness:

"Cozumel."

An expression of astonishment now took the place of doubt. He let his mind wander back to the ship-charts. He slowly recalled the position of an island named Cozumel.

"What!" said he, trying to rise, "am I so near the coast of Yucatan?"

"*Si* — yes — *cerca de* — near Yucatan," responded Don Pedro.

Slowly the boy's lips moved. He meant to speak aloud; but Don Pedro heard no sound. The boy rehearsed the past only to his own consciousness:

"Ah, yes; it was that great wave hanging over us! It crushed down and swept us all into the sea, and I was dashed into the boat that hung over the stern. I suppose I clung to the seat. Probably I drifted. I have been picked up, I suppose, story-book fashion. Where are the others?" he cried suddenly and audibly. "I ought to see about it at once! See here! there are several besides me; let us set out at once."

Vainly trying to rise, he sank back with a groan, and, turning his face to the wall, wrestled with the anguish of full recollection.

Don Pedro was in despair. He could catch only a fragment of the boy's meaning. But he gathered that he had been wrecked on the southern reef, and that there were others in need of assistance. He walked

the floor, pulling at his long white beard, devoutly wishing again that there was some common language between him and the boy.



The reader has already concluded that Don Pedro's patient was no other than our adventurous John North. The first great sea that toppled over the *Dappled Diver* swept him into the long-boat hanging by its davits; the second freed the boat from its fastenings and flung her over the reef into

a sheltered lagoon, where she floated, beyond the reach of the breakers, and drifted finally, with the unconscious occupant, against the northern point forming the entrance to the lake. (*See map.*)

By the time John had awakened from the heavy sleep into which he fell at length, it was noon. The sun hung above the lake, a ball of fire above a glowing mirror. Don Pedro, meantime, had resolved upon a visit to the wreck, which he knew must lie near. He was only waiting for a word with the boy. Now that he had wakened, he brought him a great green cocoanut full of cool delicious water; and after drinking it, John felt so much better that he insisted upon rising and setting forth at once.

Don Pedro protested; made him understand that the sun was too hot, the distance too far, the excitement too great; that he would be back by sunset. But the coast-bred New England boy laughed at the idea of being unmanned by a night's wetting. He rose and shook himself, staggered for a moment, and then in expressive pantomime demanded his clothes. Don Pedro, cheered with the young man's energy, fished up some old garments from a battered sea-chest. In these John was soon dressed, and they set out.

Don Pedro carried a great wicker haversack upon his shoulders, in which he had placed cooked provisions and some stimulants. Each had a large stick, and Don Pedro buckled about his waist a broad leather belt full of cartridges, with a pistol and long knife.

By referring to the map, the reader will notice that

Don Pedro's hut was set down on the shore of a little bay on the west side of the lake, and that between it and the sea or open channel where the wreck occurred, there was but a narrow strip of land, covered with dense forest. Through this forest Don Pedro had long since opened a path; for the wreck of the *Diver* was not the first that had happened on that reef; in fact, he depended more upon what the sea cast up to him, than upon the fish and turtle he drew out of it; and it was his custom to visit the point once a week — every Sunday — and this he had done for years, accumulating in his weekly excursions much valuable spoil. Evidence of this might be seen in the furnishings of his hut, and he had another cabin at the reefs where he stored whatever he could not move to the house by the lake.

The path was about two miles in length, and led on through deep woods where underfoot was white coral rock, and overhead a dense canopy of leaves. Don Pedro strode ahead with his great knife, cutting away the vines that had fallen across the trail since his last visit; and in spite of the solemn errand upon which they were bound, and his own weakness, John felt a sense of joy and courage as he followed, inhaling the delicious forest odors. He was half bewildered by the strange forms of vegetation. Long vines hung from great trees, dropping suddenly from out the maze of branches above, without visible root or support; and these coiled about each other, intertwined and hung with giant ferns and long mosses. Through these vines, and from tree to tree, darted bright-colored birds, the whole forest musical with their song and chatter.

At sight of these John felt stir a pulse of his old ambition. He longed to begin his commission for the museum that moment. But how could he work? His gun and ammunition were lost; so was the money that had been paid him in advance. But he cheered up presently; partly from the Yankee consciousness of a birthright of good luck, and partly from a tingling of strength and vim along vein, nerve and sinew.



DON PEDRO'S HUT.

The freshness of the great green sea-washed region was like balm and wine. Hungrily, thirstily, he took great draughts of these subtle restoratives. Confident that a way would be opened to his work, even as one had been for his escape from the sea, he followed Don Pedro, watching for the first glimpse of the sea.



WILD DEER OF YUCATAN.

After an hour or so the trees became smaller, the forest more open, dwindling to low bushes, then came in sight the sand dunes; and at the same time the roaring of the sea burst upon their ears. Anxiously, without a word, they climbed the last sand-hillock and looked off upon the open water. Below were the reefs, from which the breakers were tossing sheets of foam, and between were quiet lagoons filled with sea-mosses and bright-banded fish.

"Is there nothing, not a spar left of the vessel?" said John to himself.

The next moment there loomed up the battered hulk of the *Diver* without masts, rigging gone, but standing bolt upright on the edge of a reef of coral. Her entire hull was out of water, and he saw that a pathway of coral led out and nearly reached her. He started on a run down the bank, but Don Pedro, partly by signs and partly by words, halted him.

"Stay here till I go and examine. It is better, because I know the coast."

John understood. Much against his will he remained on the sand. His heart beat so wildly that at last he sat down. In a short time he was to know whether any remained of the crew, or whether he was a lone castaway. It seemed only a half-mile to the wreck, but Don Pedro proceeded slowly, the coral points were so sharp and so slimy with seaweed; and John's gaze was divided between him as he picked his way and the forlorn hulk, so pitiful in its helpless condition.

Once as his eyes rested upon the vessel, he fancied he saw a wreath of smoke rise into the air amidst ships. Rubbing his eyes, he looked again. This time he was sure. A thin column of smoke rose straight up in the still air. He could not contain himself. He shouted to Don Pedro:

"Hullo! Hurrah! hurrah!"

The Mexican looked back. Following the direction of John's hand, he too saw the smoke, and waved his arms as token of it. John rushed down the bank and out upon the coral strand, though Don Pedro waved him back. But he kept on; and he paid the penalty of disobedience too, for as he reached the Mexican, he found him bending above a startling, sorrowful sight—one of the *Dappled Diver's* crew stretched out cold and stiff, one hand clinging to the seaweed, and his vacant eyes rolled up to the sky.

It was from an apprehension of this very thing, and from a doubt of his strength to stand the shock, that Don Pedro had cautioned him to await his return. Now he had the grim satisfaction of seeing the wilful boy's face grow ghastly, and his legs weaken so that he must have fallen but for an outstretched arm.

"Now you go back," entreated Don Pedro; "there'll be more."

"No," persisted John. "I go on. I can endure now, if I find them all. I *must* reach the vessel; there there is at least one man alive."

Taking him by the hand, Don Pedro led the way, muttering prayers; and finally they reached a point whence their voices might reach the ears of whoever might be on board.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted John; but his voice was not the clear clarion it was when he could make a person hear distinctly across the old North farm. It must have fallen far short of the mark.

Then Don Pedro joined in with a wild, grim Mexican sort of "Hullo!"

It answered the purpose, though addressed to Yankee ears. They heard a faint answering shout, like an echo; but it was not an echo, for soon a head appeared above the rail, and then the figure of a man with wildly waving arms; and they heard joyful, though unintelligible, shouts.

And now another figure joined the first. John made a telescope of his hand. He thought he recognized Tom Bolton, their cook. A little later he was sure, for no other man or boy would have stood on his head for joy, and waved his legs instead of his arms.

Soon they got near enough to hear one



THE TERN.

another's calls. Then they learned that the two were Tom Bolton and Mr. Walker, the mate.



PECCARY, OR WILD HOG.

"Hold on!" shouted the mate. "I can bring you aboard, if you can't bring us ashore."

He disappeared, was gone for a few minutes, then came in sight again with a coil of line. To one end of this he tied a heavy lead.

"Now stand from under!"

He whirled the lead about his head, then let fly the coil, which straightened out, reached across the channel and well up upon the coral.

"Pull in the slack," he cried.

John and Don Pedro pulled until they brought up from the water the end of a heavy rope which the mate had bent on to the line.

"That's the talk," he shouted again; "now make the cable fast about one of them rocks some ways from the shore."

This done, the mate and Tom took several turns about the capstan, and soon drew the cable tight as a drumhead.

"Three Swiss Family Robinson cheers for our suspension bridge!" cried Tom. "Let's see how she works!"

Before the mate could prevent, he had darted over the side, and swarmed across the rope-bridge like a monkey across a grape-vine between trees.

"How are you, John, old fellow?" he demanded eagerly, as the two boys grasped each other by the hand. "I'm mighty glad to see you, 'specially" — and here he looked as sorrowful as was possible to Tom Bolton — "'specially's the mate and I thought we was all there was left. Come aboard, and see how snug we're fixed, you and your friend here. What's the old chap's name anyway? Don't-ee he speak-ee English?"

"Easy, Tom," said John, feeling the enlivening effect of his presence, and smiling. "He understands sufficient English for you to have a care in what you

say; as for his name, I don't know what it is yet myself."

"No matter; good feller, anyhow; saved your life, did he?"

"Old gentleman, if you're a friend of John's you're my friend too. Shake-ee now, shake-ee!"

Don Pedro smiled, much amused at this odd, rosy, plump specimen of a boy, and gave Tom's hand a hearty grip.

"Now come aboard, both of you!" cried Tom, "and — hallo! look at that shark! And there's a dozen more taking up their stations right under the rope. This 'ere bridge is a leetle nearer the water than I'd like for the first few feet from shore."

"Oh, I'll go ahead if you say fear's the word, Tom," said John; and lightly climbing the rope, he was soon over the rail with his hands in the horny palms of the mate. Don Pedro after signing Tom to be careful, which Tom mimicked behind his back in very excess of high spirits, also reached the vessel's side in safety; and after they were aboard Tom shouted out that he



TOM CROSSES THE SUSPENSION BRIDGE.

was going to cruise along shore a little, to see what he could pick up.

The old *Dappled Diver* decks were desolate enough.

"You can see what a pickle we're in," said the mate; "not a loose piece of plank left big enough to swim by, let alone make a raft of. Howsoever, if you hadn't hove in sight when you did, we should have up anchor and made a lay for land to-morrow; for though the *Diver's* high and dry now, the fust west wind'll likely drift her out to sea. You see how she's fixed—sot right into a cradle in the reef, and can't budge an inch long's the wind holds the way 'tis; but when the wind changes, then look out, says I."

John asked for an account of the wreck from ship-board standpoint, and Mr. Walker sat down to spin the dark yarn.

"Well, John," said he, "you see that big wave just knocked everybody over like tenpins, and every single soul that was on deck was washed overboard. After that the waves weakened, till finally they throwed us on to the reef just far enough to be out of reach of the wust ones, and there we sot, jest as safe as if we was shored up on the stocks; you see everything had gone by the board a long time before, and there wa'n't nothing to topple her over—no masts nor rigger."

"But where were you all this time, mate?"

"I was below; I said to Captain Bowker, said I, 'Cap'n, it's my opinion we're better off below, for whatever comes, we can't do no good on deck.' That was a few minutes before that wave hit us; but he up and said that his duty was on deck, and if he'd got to die he'd be found with his hand on the wheel; and so I s'pose he was, poor fellow!"

"I went below and got into my bunk. The next thing I know'd I heerd an awful screeching, and the vessel heeled over a minute, and then there was a lull, and the water came pouring into the cabin till it was half-way up to my bunk. But I lay there till mighty near daylight, when not seein' the water gainin', I ventured to wade to the cabin stairs, and put my head up outside. 'Ahoy on deck there!' says I. 'There wa'n't no answer. 'Anybody alive?' says I. 'There wa'n't no sound except the dash of the waves against the counter, and the wailin' of the wind. I tell ye I felt scared. The blood kind o' settled 'round my heart, and I fell down on the deck, and I tried to pray. Says I: 'O Lord, am I the only living thing aboard this vessel?' Every one that went is a better man than I be—why did you leave me?' Then I sot there till daylight."

"But where was Tom all this time?"

"Well, I'll tell ye: Tom was asleep!"

"Asleep! How could he sleep through all that terrible night?"

"That's what I say. But sleep he did. Blamed if he didn't sleep through the hull on't. And the fust thing I know'd was his comin' up and layin' his hand on my shoulder, and a-sayin', 'Seems to me, mate, they's a good deal of water in the cabin,' says he. And when I looked up, amazed that there had somebody been alive all that time in the vessel, he says, says he, 'Mate, where's the rest of us?'"

"And then I answered and said, '*Tom, there ain't no rest of us now; we're all there is.*' He dropped down on the bitts there as though he'd been struck by a marlinespike. There we both sot without sayin' a word till noon. Bymeby Tom up and picks himself up kinder slowly, and says he, 'Mate, I reckon we've got to have somethin' to eat. I'll rummage the caboose.' Then I see there wa'n't no use settin' there. I gathered myself together and hunted round for something to make a fire; and we'd jest got our breakfast, and had time to bail the heft of the water out of the cabin when you diskivered us. Go below and take a look? Invite your chum, if you like. Mexican, ain't he? What d'you say his name was?"

"You know as well as I, for I haven't heard him say, and don't know how to ask him."

"Just so. But all these fellers speak Spanish, and when I was on the Spanish Main I learnt to jabber that. Now you just lay back and listen. Here goes:

"I say Seeñor, *parlez vous Espanol*, hey?"

"*Si, Señor*—"

"You no speaky English lettly bit, hey?"

"*No, Señor.*"

"Understandy some, hey?"

"*Si, Señor, comprendo un poco.*" (Yes, sir, I understand a little.)

"Well then, you don't mind tellin' me your name, do you?"

"*Como?*" (How?)

"Your name; can't you tell us what your daddy calls you to hum?"

"Ah, *usted quiere mi nombre?*" (You wish to know my name?) "*To soy*" (I am) "*Pedro Pinto, a su disposicion.*" (At your service.)

"There, now you're talkin'! Well, John, he calls himself Pedro Pinto. Pedro is Peter, and to do the correct thing, we oughter call him Don Pedro, or Mr. Peter. Well, Don Pedro, I'm mighty glad to see you,

though we have come on to you rather sudding. There, John, I guess I've done the business up kinder slick; come below now.

"You see everything jist about as you left it," continued the mate cheerfully, as they descended the cabin stairs and passed into the wet and dismal rooms. "'Bout the same, only 'tain't. Here's the chronometer, jist as Captain strapped it up to take with him. Well, he's gone himself, but he didn't take no timepiece. Here's all his charts and

As if in reply, Tom's voice reached them ringing out from the water edge to which the rope-bridge was stretched: "Help! help!"

Rushing to the rail, they saw Tom struggling in the water, clinging to the slackened cable.

"Help!" he cried. "*The sharks are after me!*"

In the thickening twilight, they saw three ghostly white bodies gliding through the water towards the spot where poor Tom was splashing, his body half submerged. It seemed a hopeless case, for there



THE MEXICAN WAS THE FIRST TO ACT.

papers and cur'os'ties that he's been a-savin' for his wife and children, poor things! All this property and all there is movable aboard, I've got to make myself responsible for to the owners and underwriters. What's yourn, you take. Nobody knows if I'll ever git away home to render an account at all. Here's your room, and here's your chist and box; guess you'd better git 'em up on deck, and take out what's in 'em, and dry 'em in the sun; guess your powder's pooty wet by this time, and your gun some rusty. It's nigh onto sunset, but and if you an' Don Pedro'll take hold, we'll git out what we can. Here we air on deck; to-night we'll stretch a awning, and sleep here. Wonder what's become of Tom — 'bout dark; ought to be here."

was nothing at hand to throw at the sharks, and if one descended the rope to grasp the boy, it would only slacken the more and plunge him the deeper. John turned white. Was the most terrible incident of all sea-life stories to come true under his very eyes? The Mexican was the first to act. Motioning the mate to the capstan to tighten the cable, he took his long bright knife between his teeth, and swinging over the rail, crept cautiously along the rope.

He drew nearer and nearer, but he was fully a rod away when the leading shark turned over on his back and glided beneath the boy with open mouth set with white and glistening teeth.

OUT OF DANGER INTO DANGER.

CHAPTER III.



“ARAMBA!” muttered Don Pedro between his teeth, slipping along the rope; “the boy’s gone! ha! that was not badly done!”

By a convulsive upward fling, Tom had raised himself out of water at the right instant, and the shark’s jaws closed on empty

air; not on air alone either, for they clutched the lower portion of his jacket, and held on.

The sweat broke out on Don Pedro’s forehead and hands. If he advanced one move nearer, he would sink the cable deeper, and Tom’s hold would probably give way. There was but just one thing to do—a risky thing. But he reached around, drew his revolver from his belt, and levelled it at the head of the shark. The aim was a sure one; at the report the jaws relaxed, and Tom was for a moment free. But only for a moment, for before he could move on into safety, the blood that tinged the water from the wounded fish drew a score of others, cruel and eager; four at once swam straight for the place of the wounded one, in their blind, furious haste disregarding Tom, who now hung helpless with one arm over the cable, and his eyes starting from his bloodless face as he beheld the eddying horror beneath him.

Don Pedro was again equal to the emergency. Dropping his revolver he crept forward, seized the heavy, inert fellow, and by a mighty lift and spring, cleared the horrible seething waters below, and placed Tom before him—above him—on the rope. The tightening of the cable through the combined efforts of John and the mate at the capstan, raised them a little, but not beyond the reach of the sharks, who by a lucky leap could still have seized them both.

“For your life,” gasped Don Pedro as he motioned

Tom to climb along the rope. The boy understood the situation well enough to draw himself—though slowly and clumsily—up the slanting cable towards the ship’s side, where at last John grasped him by the collar and lifted him over the rail.

This had occupied several long minutes; and meanwhile Don Pedro was in peril himself. Had he followed Tom immediately, he might have escaped; but the sturdy old fisher lingered to have a blow at the sharks. He bore them an ancient grudge, for they were constantly besetting him at sea, and had robbed his nets of many a catch. They were not slow to meet him half-way. One after another they rose, with open mouths, gnashing their white teeth in vain efforts to seize him as he dealt them blow after blow with his keen-edged knife.

John and the mate watched this battle with dismay, for they saw Don Pedro’s danger better than he himself. And now knotting a rope around his waist and taking another in his hand, leaving the mate holding the slack of both, John crept in his turn down the cable towards the rash man who had saved his life. He had evidently become conscious of his folly and his peril, and would have turned, but he could not; for when he should turn, so near was he to the water, his leg would be bitten off in an instant; as it was, the mass of sharks below were only kept at bay by repeated blows. Without moving his head, he called vehemently: “*Carne! carne!*”

“What does he mean?” called the mate to John; “he is saying *meat, meat!*” Then he caught his breath with an angry laugh. “Oh, what a dunder-head! Tom, can’t you get at the storeroom and haul out some bacon? That’s what he means. Quick! bestir yourself whether you can or not, and heave it over at the stern! That will draw them sea-wolves away from him! Quick, now! he can’t last there much longer!”

At the repeated splashings of the great pieces of pork, the attention of the sharks was drawn, and all but the desperately wounded ones swam in that direction; all but one which refused to leave, and at him, as his head appeared above the surface, Don

Pedro darted a savage and despairing blow. The knife struck deep, stuck fast, and, in his efforts to withdraw it, Don Pedro fell into the seething waves.

This was John's opportunity. In an instant he was in the place just occupied by the Mexican, and reaching him the rope. Don Pedro was no slow-thoughted, unwieldy Tom. In a flash he grasped it, running his arm through the noose getting a firm grip on it, and the mate at the other end drew in with a will. But now it appeared that the obstinate Mexican had refused to let go his hold on the knife, and what with his weight and the struggle of the shark, the mate could make but slow headway. He

the rest of the sharks, and in two minutes they'll make mince-meat of ye! Le' go, I say; le' go!"

With a groan, Don Pedro loosed his hold on the knife, and they had him out of the water; and not a second too soon either, for the channel was fairly seething with sharks.

"Look at the beggars!" cried the mate in mingled wrath and disgust, as they landed Don Pedro on deck. "I can count more'n forty fins cuttin' the water there. Well, old fellow, how d'ye feel?"

"*Mi cuchillo, y mi pistole!* — oh, my knife and my pistol!" groaned the fisherman: "I've lost them both."

"Well, yes, I sh'd say you had; but don't mind that, we've enough aboard here," answered the mate, shaking off his fatigue with a shrug and a

smile. "And now is not this a merry-go-round! Just Don Pedro rescues John, then he saves Tom, and then John saves Don Pedro, and then I save the lot of ye; all it lacks is, I should fall overboard and the rest of ye turn to and rescoo me; an' I ain't so sure, Mr. Peter Pinto, that your knife's gone either; they say that nothin' ain't lost when you know where 'tis, and there's your knife a-held into that shark's jaws. If I had a harpoon now, I'd soon have him on deck, knife an' all. Tom, don't you know where there's a harpoon, or grains, or somethin'?"

"I don't know where nothin' is, and don't care," said Tom feebly: "but I believe there's one in the cap'n's room all rigged, with a line on it."

The mate went into the cabin, and soon came out with a harpoon. Lashing one end of the rope to the taffrail, rigging a block, and then running a line to the stump of the mainmast, he announced himself ready for business. Don Pedro's shark lay on his side stone dead, and of course immovable, except when his brethren dashed to take a mouthful; and he offered a fair mark for the harpoon. "There she is, my hearties! now pull away," cried the mate.

All tumbled to with a will except Tom, and the shark was soon stretched on deck, the handle of Don Pedro's knife still protruding from his under jaw.

It may be necessary to state for the information of those who have never closely examined a shark, that his mouth being underneath, he must turn over upon his back before he can bite. This shark evidently was just turning over when the fatal stroke pierced



THE SHARK MAKES A STRANGE REVELATION.

got him at last to the side of the vessel, but that was all he could do. John had crept up the cable, and now as he struck deck, he lent a hand; but together, they could not raise the combined weight of the fisherman and the shark.

"Le' go that knife!" howled the mate; "here come

the brain from the inside. But for this lucky blow, Don Pedro might have been badly torn by the wounded fish when he fell.

"Well!" exclaimed the mate as he vainly tried to pull out the knife, "what a tremenjús muscle you must have, Mr. Mexican! I can't even start that knife!"

But at last with an axe from the after-hold, they cleft the stout skull, and Don Pedro drew forth his precious knife and replaced it in his scabbard.

"Now if you had your revolver you'd be happy, wouldn't ye?" said the mate kindly as to a child. "Well, we'll have to find a better one for ye somewhere amongst the cap'n's things! Now le's dissect this chap and see what he's swallowed sence he's been cruising round these waters; they say sharks sometimes swallow strange objects."

Don Pedro drew his knife with a will and plunged it deep, intending to lay the shark entirely open. It struck something hard. He drew it forth with a great gap in its bright blade.

"Must be a harpoon," observed the mate, "or somethin'."

With an exclamation of astonishment, Don Pedro drew forth the object that the knife had struck. He looked at it with amazement.

"Jumping grasshoppers! if that ain't a pistol," cried the mate, coming up and looking over his shoulder.

"*Es mio*," gasped Don Pedro. "It is mine."

"So 'tis! the same identical weepin you saved Tom's life with! Carve away, and le's see what else the rascal's stowed away!"

The carving brought to light a rather miscellaneous assortment of hardware—a condensed milk can, a reeving block, and a small tin box which had been so long in the interior of the shark as to be completely encysted, or enclosed, in a sack of skin.

"A regular swimmin' curios'ty shop," commented the mate; "they do says a ostrich'll swaller anything, and grow fat on board nails and gimlets; but a shark 'll just beat him, it seems! Open the box, John, and le's see what's in that!"

They pried the cover off, and disclosed a wad of oiled paper, or silk. Separating this, they found a roll of brown, time-discolored paper.

"That all?" cried the mate. "Thought it was a wad of bank bills, sure! Overboard with it!"

"Wait!" cried John, arresting his arm. "Don't you

see what that is? *It's worth more to me than all the money aboard!* Read it!"

The mate carefully spread out the paper. It proved to be two leaves from some old book. "Well," said he, "there it is, all before you, and the title at the head of the page is, *The Con — The Conquest of Mexico*. Don't see nothin' startlin' in that! What different do you see, my young friend?"

John stood staring at the paper. His thoughts were travelling back to the farmhouse garret two thousand miles away. By a great effort, he recalled himself. His voice was hoarse as he reached for the



"IT CANNOT BE FOR NOTHING AT ALL," SAID JOHN.

paper. "Mate, that belongs to me. It is *my lost clue!*"

"Belongs to you, does it? Well, you can have it, of course; but what do you mean?"

Without answer, John took the lantern and went to his chest, followed by the curious mate. He drew out an old book bound in parchment. Opening it at a certain place he said, "Mate, can you make out the numbers on those pages we have just found?"

"The first one's numbered two hundred and twenty-seven, and the last two hundred and thirty."

"Now look in this book, and tell me what are the two pages lying open before you."

"Two hundred and twenty-six and two hundred and thirty-one," said the mate; "seems to be two leaves missing."

"Exactly; and those two leaves you have in your hand."

The mate gave a long, expressive whistle. "That's a fact! the same title on to the pages, and the very numbers that air missing! John, how comes it?"

"Ah, mate, I would give the world to know for certain," said John wearily, pressing his brow with both hands. "These two leaves are the last clue to the location of the Silver City. They were missing from my book. Just where the description of the city should come in, there was this gap. Now I can trace my way; but oh, to solve the deeper mystery—how these two leaves drifted from New England down upon this coast!"

"I know what you're thinkin' of," said the mate kindly; "that story the cap'n told you about the old sea-feller lost down here about ten years ago, and who you thought might be your father."

"But you know I am not sure that he was lost," said John firmly. "Even in a shipwreck, why not he be rescued as miraculously as I? How do I know that he has not penetrated the interior, and is alive somewhere this moment? Answer me that! You know no one else could have brought hither leaves from *my* book, don't you?"

"And *you* think it likely the fish has carried that air tin box in his stummick for ten years—'twould a given him the dyspepsy, John! But I'm not goin' to take the hope out of ye. I'll just set ye right, and mebbe give ye more hope. This shark might have carried the box six months or a year—that ain't nothin' unnatural. So it's my opinion your father didn't carry it in his pocket before the accident, but in his chest, or on a shelf in his cabin. Now, what's the inference from this? Why, jist this; That we have here a sartin proof that somebody was wrecked down here who had read your book, and took out them leaves for a purpose; second, that it's more than likely that person was your father; third, that the findin' it here ain't no proof positive that he's drowned; fourth, it *is* likely that this tin box sot in the cabin somewhere, and was washed overboard when the vessl broke up, and that might a-been at the time of the wreck, but was most likely a good many years after. But we can't place no where-

abouts. Sharks is a wanderin' animal; they don't allers cruise in the same place; and then again, the currents might a-drifted the box for a hundred miles or more. Lookin' at it this way, I should say that this ere box come from somewhere south o' here. Further than this I can't say; but we can ask Don Pedro about it to-morrer. He's likely to know all the wrecks on the whole east coast. Not to-night; you're all played out. If it hadn't been for this excitement, you couldn't kept up as you have."

John acquiesced; he was indeed weak, and was trembling now from his shipwreck and from the excitement, of the afternoon.

By the time the deck had been washed off, blankets spread, and a sail stretched over, it was late into the night. But John could not sleep. After the others had dropped off, he rose and went to the rail. The moon was sailing grandly up the sky, stretching a pathway of light across the still sea, and bringing into relief the black wall of forest on the eastern shore of the island.

No life was stirring except for a black fin cleaving the channel beneath; and no sound broke the quiet except the roar of the breakers outside the reef. A great surge of homesickness swept over the young adventurer on the wreck. The quiet security of the old New England farm sleeping in the moonlight, seemed too precious a possession to have been so recklessly abandoned. But presently the old inbred New England belief in "leadings of Providence," got the better of this tender longing for the peaceful shelter of the roof-tree. What a miraculous shipwreck! What a miraculous restoration of the missing leaves of the old Spanish book—the clue-leaves. He took out the old, discolored worn pages and looked at them tenderly. But it was his father, not the treasure city, which was uppermost in John's thoughts and plans. "It cannot be for nothing at all!" said John with reverent firmness. "God would not so play at fast-and-loose with poor mother. If I live, I know that I am to find father before I go back."

John really felt most satisfactorily certain of this; and presently, feeling he could best help affairs by laying in a stock of sleep and rest, he returned to his rough bed under the sail.

It was early morning, the moon still hanging above the island forest, when the mate woke them all, and laid before them the work he had planned for the day.

"I reckon," said he, as they ate breakfast, "that

it'll take jest about a day to git out all of value in the *Diver*, and house it on the beach there above the coral."

After breakfast they set at work with a real Family Robinson vim. From the shooks and staves in the hold, and some pieces of timber, they made a raft much as Tom and the mate had originally planned, and let it down into the water, which served them much better than the cable bridge of yesterday. A rope was rigged so that they could draw it from vessel to shore, and back again; then it was loaded with provisions and valuables, and drawn over and un-

after the moonlight burial of poor Jack Rawlins was, that they should return with him through the woods to his home cabin which was larger and more comfortable than this wrecking hut, where, in fact, there was no room at all inside, it being so full of the effects from the vessel, that they would be obliged to sleep on the sand under a sail.

Tired as they were, and late as it was, they agreed to this, and at once prepared for the two-mile tramp through the forest.

"Dunno but it's a resky thing," said the mate aside to John. "The Mexican says nobody ever comes



IN COUNCIL.

loaded on the coral rock. It was slow work, and hard work; but by noon they had the ship's stores piled upon the rocks; and during the afternoon, managed to get most of it to the sand beach and into Don Pedro's wrecking camp.

"Anyhow," said Tom, who was fast getting his tone again, "we've an island, and a vessel, and a year's provisions, to begin life with. We aren't quite orphans."

The mate and Don Pedro understood each other's queer Spanish-English fairly well, and it was agreed that Don Pedro should be their guide and chief while they remained on the island; and his first order

round here except himself, but between you and me, John, there's some valooables here. Did you mind that small box I was keerful to carry myself all the way to shore? Well, there's over two thousand dollars in it in gold belongin' to the owners of the *Diver*, that cap'n brung with him to buy sugar with and sich. Now wouldn't ye meditate a spell before ye let on to the Mexican there's that amount o' gold a-lyin' about?"

John agreed that it would do no harm to "meditate" first, and concluded to leave his own Institute money along with the *Diver* gold, in the solitude of the wrecking cabin, though in his heart he

felt a warm impulsive trust in the old fisherman.

Don Pedro led the way over the path he and John had followed the day before. There was no necessity for cutting away vines and bushes now; still the trail was so obscure, they were obliged to follow their guide single file.



THROUGH THE TREE-TOPS.

“Kinder pokerish,” said Tom, who waddled along close behind Don Pedro’s heels. “And kinder pleasant too! Mighty nice air! Seems like somebody’d bust a barrel of cologne water all over the ground! Rather a fine thing this, John, eh?”

But John was occupied with the weird effects produced by the moonlight as it struggled through the trees and vines above their heads. Only now and then did a beam penetrate so far as the path, or glance athwart the gloomy space before them; but overhead there was an indescribable fretwork of ebony and silver. Where the light did pierce so, it transformed everything—leaves, vines, plants—into grotesque images of beasts and reptiles. A great vine stretching across their path, and doubling upon itself in numerous folds, seemed a great boa constrictor

waiting motionless for them to approach. Dark forms appeared to lurk in the shade only to skulk off silently as they came near. Real bats and owls softly fluttered above their heads, and myriads of night insects kept up so dense a noise they could scarcely hear one another speak.

They had made more than half the distance, and were passing through a particularly lonely spot, when Tom broke the silence again. He too had become wrapt in watching the transformed shapes of trees and vines, and the resemblance some of the leaves bore to spiders and lizards.

“Look, John!” cried he, pointing to a bright spot in the gloom. “Don’t that leaf there look like a big spider? I’m going to pull it off and take it along, and see how it looks by daylight.”

As he spoke, he reached out to seize it. The leaf darted forward to meet him, and he cried out suddenly in great pain:

“Oh, I’m bitten! That *was* a spider!”

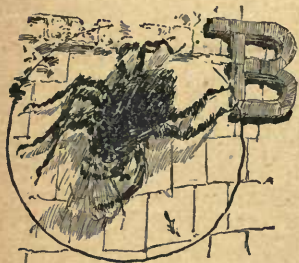
Don Pedro sprang back. He drew Tom into the moonlight, and examined his thumb. It was swelling, and the boy was already in great anguish. He shook his head, and taking Tom by the arm, hurried him along.

“What is it?” demanded John and the mate.

“*A mi casa!*” said he; “to my house at once! It was a tarantula!”

THE CAMP ON COZUMEL.

CHAPTER IV.



URIED beneath groups of cocoa palms stood the cabin of Don Pedro, silent and secure as he had left it two days before.

The party emerged from the darkness of the forest, crossed the glade flooded by the moonlight, and plunged under the dimly-lighted arches of the palm crowns. With a mighty kick Don Pedro hastily burst open the loosely-secured door and dragged Tom in. Seating him on a heap of turtle nets in the corner, he hastened behind the grass matting partition, and after searching a minute, came out with a tiny bottle and glass. Pouring out a few drops of the liquid, he handed it to the boy, motioning him to drink. Tom did so; but immediately his whole body seemed to be on fire, and he shouted for water.

But Don Pedro motioned his friends impatiently aside. He saturated a strip of cloth in the same liquid, wrapped it about the swollen thumb, repeatedly moistening it. It was some time before he gave him water; but at last, looking into his eyes, he nodded hopefully and allowed John to place the waiting draught to his lips. Then he laid his patient upon a bed of turtle nets, and covered him with a blanket, and bade him sleep.

Don Pedro then lighted a candle, and beckoning the men, held up the bottle to the light. They started back with exclamations of disgust, for it contained nothing less than a huge spider—a tarantula—"pickled," as the mate expressed it, in brandy.

"And is that what you have given Tom to take?" demanded John.

"Sí," (yes,) answered Don Pedro calmly. He explained that it was an infallible cure, and in common use in the tropics.

Don Pedro shrugged his shoulders as much as to say that the mate could do as he pleased, but he

would rather take spider, bottle and all, than be bitten in the forest without his favorite remedy handy.

He dismissed the affair by reaching up to a smoke-blackened rafter and untying a string, thus letting down two hammocks suspended side by side from the corner of the room.

"*Todos son muy a son disposiciones, señores?*" said he, bowing, and gracefully waving his hand to include everything there was in the cabin.

"What does he say, mate?" asked John, yet half interpreting their host's hospitable meaning by his sweeping gestures.

"Well, that's a little too long for me to take in all at once," replied the mate pondering.

"Oh, I've got it! He says that his house and all there is in it is ours s'long's we want to stay. All these Mexicans say that, but I can tell you they don't always mean it, by a long chalk; but let me tell you again, our friend here does, I'll bet a dollar. Thank you, Don Pedro; much obliged. Don't put yourself out a mite, but jest make us one of the folks. Shall we take the hammocks or the bench?"

"*Donde ustades quieren*" (where you please), said Pedro, smiling. So they took the hammocks, into which had been thrown a couple of handsome Indian blankets, the mate remarking as they stowed themselves away:

"John, this interpretation business is gittin' too heavy for me. I can understand the ord'nary sailor Spanish, but when he comes any of the fancy dodges, such as the different tenses of them verbs, and the singular and plural numbers, *et cetera*, blowed if I ain't all to sea. You're quick at book larnin'; can't you come to the rescow?"

John laughed. "I have studied Spanish at home from a book evenings," said he; "but it is so different when you come to hear it spoken, that I don't recognize many of the words yet. However, to-morrow I'll get out my conversation book and try it on a new plan."

The last one to wag his tongue at night, the mate was the first to break silence next morning: "Hullo! Tumble out, youngsters! sun's up; leastwise, though they ain't no winders in this hut, it's streamin' through

a chink there. Ain't it cold? Thought this was a hot country! 'Cording to the charts, we're in the tropics; but a blanket wa'n't any too much last night."

John and Tom were awakened by this time, and the latter stretched himself and rolled over on the



DON PEDRO CAME OUT WITH A TINY BOTTLE.

clay floor, where he lay on his back looking up with surprise until the voice of his superior officer called out:

"How's your thumb?"

"Oh, yes; here I am! I thought I was, but didn't know but I was a-dreamin' yet. A shipwreck an' a pair of rescues; first from a shark's jaws and second from a spider's jaws. Oh, yes; I'm the feller, and here I am, thumb all right! Isn't this prime though?" By this time Tom was taking an observation through a big chink in the walls of the cabin. "A breakfast a-getting ready with none o' my help; a-growin' as 'twere, out o' doors its own self; leastwise here's Don Pedro out here with a pot a-bilin' over a blazin' fire under a cocoanut-tree. I say this is fun alive! A whole island all to ourselves, fish and turtle in the sea, and game a-roamin' in the woods! So, boys, I'm goin' to consider myself fixed for life, if Don Peter's no objection to the same!"

"Now see here," said Mr. Walker, "don't you go to kitin' about here as if the whole hut belonged to you, and the island thrown in! Don Pedro's a polite man, an' it's my intention he shall have politeness in return. I know you mean well, Tom, but your manners ain't always agreeable; and it kinder reflects on the place where you's born and brought up, and on me as comin' from the same town."

"Brought up!" cried Tom, turning on him. "Yes! I had a lot of bringing up, didn't I? Brought up with a round turn by the ear, that's the only kind I had; and cuffed about ever sence I can remember, till I took up maratime cookery as 'twere. That's what's soured my temper, gentlemen!"

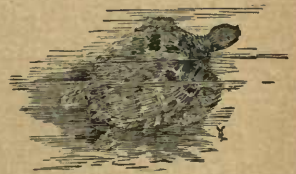
Tom grinned so comically that all burst into a hearty laugh, including the Mexican who just then entered to invite them to a breakfast of fish and turtle steak. As they ate they planned the work for the day: the mate and Don Pedro to go around by the inland channel in the long-boat, and bring over the valuables, the boys to remain at the lake cabin to get thoroughly rested for the morrow, when the Mexican was to take them over the island and show them the extent of the domain he now very politely offered to share with them for life.

"Ain't he the cleverest feller you ever met in your life?" said Tom, as the boat containing Don Pedro and the mate disappeared around the rocks that hid the channel to the sea. "He ain't at all that sassy sombrero kind o' Mexican you meet in your books. You feels like he was your father or your uncle. I'm going to stay."

John did not make his intentions known. He felt it no harm to give himself up for one day to the romance of the situation.

All that day till late in the afternoon the boys lounged about the cabin under the palm-trees. They got out the hammocks from inside, and swinging them between the trees, lay there in perfect content and restfulness, drinking cocoanut water from the nuts they knocked off of the palms, and feasting on delicious fish they broiled on the coals in the open air.

When the boat returned it was loaded deep, and they turned to with a will to carry its contents up to end of the long thatched hut had



A FOOD SUPPLY.

stone walls, and was used by Don Pedro as a store room; it had a clay floor hard as cement, and as the roof was tight, it was an excellent place to store the ship's provisions.

"Enough here to last us a year!" said the mate as the final barrel was rolled inside; "that is, what we have here and at the other hut. All the chists and articles of value air here. Here's your chist, John, and you better git that Spanish book and larn a lesson to once, for this talkin' a language you don't know nothing about'll be the death of me. You jest throw yourself into it."

John did "throw himself into it." Don Pedro signified his willingness to become both teacher and scholar, and the whole party grew to understand one another more readily every day; the book was rarely out of hands, and the mate, as he remarked, "Jest wrastled with them Spanish verbs till he was blue in the face."

Another boatload in the afternoon about completed the transportation of their goods, except some of the heaviest of the stores, some barrels of beef and pork, which they thought could be left with safety, along with anchors, ropes, cables, etc., that they had no present use for.

"I tell ye, boys," said the mate, as he stretched himself in the hammock while Don Pedro prepared supper—the Mexican declared they were his guests for that day—to-morrow they would begin to "have things in common," work and all—"it kind o' made me feel bad to leave the old *Diver* a standin' there all dismantled on the rocks, so lonesome like, and 'specially when I thought of the cap'n and all our old neighbors—the crew as now lays at the bottom of the sea. And le' me tell you, if we could only get that vessel off to Cuby, there'd be more'n a thousan' dollars comin' to us from the cargo alone, settin' aside what the underwriters'd give us for savin' her hull; but of course she won't stan' it long, and the fust gale'll be likely to damage her some, if not split her up."

They all felt "lonesome like" that evening. They sat around the bright out-door fire in silence. Even the jolly Tom whittled away in absolute dumbness. The Mexican respected their mood, and smoked his pipe like a statue. The mate spoke at last. He seemed to have prepared a speech.

"Boys!" he began argumentatively, "there ain't no disguisin' the fact that we're on a island. We ain't got to climb no hill and look about, as Robinson Crusoe did, to find that out. And this island's off the coast of Yucatan; and Seeñor Don Pedro Pinto, who found this island uninhabited, and consequently owns it, places it all at our disposal. There ain't no nonsense about the Don; he means it. Me and him talked the matter over this forenoon, and we come to the conclusion to up and divide fair and square—his with us and ours with him. They's four of us, and each will be entitled to one fourth part of the plunder on the island, and these ere huts and boats while we chooses to stay; and then we agreed



DON PEDRO'S TREASURE-PIT.

to make common property of everything, and not have no yourn nor mine about it, except that every man keeps his own private property, of course. Ain't that so, Seeñor?"

Don Pedro removed his pipe, and gravely nodded assent; then went on calmly smoking.

"I've explained to him jest how we're sitooated; that in the course of time I ought to take the

first vessel home, being bound to render an account to the owners of the *Diver*, an' that you, John, in the course of time would feel obliged to prosecute that little matter about your father's absence; and that you, Tom, also in the course of time would go 'long home with me."

"You may jest bet your boots Tom won't do no such thing," broke in that gentleman. "I'm on this island, and I'm goin' to stick here, too, for I ain't got any home to go to. My home in futur' is on my one fourth."

"But," continued the mate, undisturbed, "Don Pedro and me after this talk kind o' concluded we would" —

"Would what?" asked John, as the mate paused.

"Well," went on the mate, "when I told Don Pedro as how you'd a notion you'd got a parint layin' round loose somewher'n this wilderness, he felt summat cut up. It seems he looked on you as his property; bein' as the sea had gi'n you to him, and a lot o' talk of that kind."

"Oh!" interrupted Tom, "if he's a lookin' for a son he might adopt me. I'd be a dutiful son. Come now, why not? You just put it afoot if he says any more about wantin' a son. I'm as much cast up by the sea as John."

"But," continued the mate, "when I mentioned that John wanted to find his father, and had particulars about the book, et cetera, he said he prob'ly knowed where the wreck was, and he'd pilot us there. He says 'tain't only a day's run below here, and soon's we've been over the island we'll fit up the long-boat and take the cruise."

John was listening with a pale face.

"Did he know anything about the crew of the vessel, Mr. Walker?" he asked now in a husky tone.

"He knows more'n he's willin' to communicate. We must wait. He's too polite a man for us to 'urges much. I made him my best bow, and said, 'Ef you please, Señor,' which was as good as anything under the circumstances."

It was late that night before they turned in, and John thought he could not have been more than two hours asleep when the mate awoke him and gently drew him out of the hammock into the open air. There he saw Don Pedro standing behind a box, a *machete* in his hand. He motioned them to follow, and the mate picked up the box, and John went after as in a dream.

The Mexican opened a way with the *machete*

through the thick underbrush on the edge of the forest, and they soon reached a glade enclosed by a ring of immense old trees. By the moonlight they saw a mound in the centre with white stones gleaming up through a tangled mass of vines and bushes. Cautiously parting this, Don Pedro entered a low doorway in the ruins of what John at once saw was an ancient tomb about eight feet in height. No word had been spoken, and their guide now placed his finger on his lips, to indicate that none should break the silence.

There was just light enough for them to distinguish the outlines of the room. It seemed to our well-read John to have once served as an adulatory, or place of worship, for some past people, for in one wall was a niche with steps leading up to it, as if to furnish a place upon which to kneel.

Don Pedro paused at the great stone forming the lower step. Taking hold of one corner, he raised it up, with the mate's assistance, and drew it half aside. As he did so, John and the mate peered into the cavity it had concealed. They nearly forgot the injunction to keep silence in their amazement, for the faint light that filtered through the crevices of the walls revealed a heap of silver coins nearly filling the hole. Don Pedro knelt, thrust his hand into the glittering pile, and let them fall, jingling musically, evidently enjoying the expression of the faces above him at sight of so much wealth. John, at a smile from the Mexican, plunged his hand in, but could not touch the bottom of the pit, though he worked his arm in to the elbow.

And now the mate opening the box he had brought, took out a package wrapped in tarred paper, and digging a hole in the coins, placed it in the centre and covered it. At a nod from Don Pedro, they worked the flat stone back into position, and scattering a little earth and lime about to conceal the joints and cracks, made their way out and back into the glade again.

Once more in the slight path leading to the cabin, Don Pedro striding before, the mate explained to John the meaning of so much mystery:

"That was the cap'n's money in that package, and that silver there belonged to Don Pedro. The Lord only knows how much there is, and where he got it; but I have s'picion he's been a pirate in his younger days — leastwise, a wrecker. But he's made an even deal now — one-fourthed it fair and square; and when I concluded to tell him about the cap'n's

money, and ask him where to hide it till such time as I could turn homeward, he volunteered to show us where he hid his own sp'iles. Share and share alike, that's him. He only don't want Tom to know. So mum's the word, till each is actily ready to shoulder his share and march off. Tom's young yet, but he'll get over that. The Don wouldn't 'low nothin' spoke in the tomb, cause he said if we did, the evil genius, or some sort of a ghostly critter, would fly away with the hull find before we could say Jack Robinson. When we git back from your

He frowned ominously when he read the title, *Conquest of Mexico*.

"*Es malicioso*," muttered he; "a malicious book; throw it into the sea! It is a wizard! it makes weak men of strong men. You give up that book so evil, son of mine."

John smiled at the Mexican's deep earnestness. "Why," said he lightly, "it describes this very island of yours, Cozumel."

"I well know that; it was written by Captain Bernal Diaz, who came here first in 1518, with the



ACROSS FROM COZUMEL.—"THIS IS TULOOM."

search, then I'll git my money and go home; and mebbe you'll be ready too, and Don Pedro will git his and travel to Spain to spend the rest of his days."

Tom proved wholly ignorant next morning of any moonlight adventure; and as nothing more was said about it, it soon appeared to John himself more like a dream than reality. The ruin, however, had brought to mind much he had read in his old book about such structures, and before breakfast he had brought out the volume.

Don Pedro saw it as he sat with it on his knee.

first Spaniards who landed here; and again with the great captain, Hernando Cortes, in 1519. Read further and you will find much to please you; but it is a bad book. It leads to treasure-hunting, which is evil, and only evil."

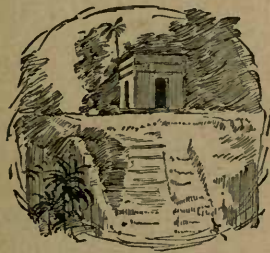
All this Don Pedro had said with difficulty; but John understood him from his familiarity with the book itself.

"It is strange to read here about Cozumel," he said, "and then to realize that I myself am upon the very island; only try to realize it—here the great

Cortes landed and reviewed his troops, just before he invaded Mexico. They found temples with idols in them, and these images they threw down and broke to pieces, setting up an image of the Virgin Mary in place of the idols in the temples. They counted fourteen towers as they coasted the shore, and the entire island was peopled with peaceful Indians who cultivated the soil. Now, Don Pedro, you tell us it is desolate; that the forest we see around us covers the island, and that it is filled with only the ruins of temples and chapels. But there probably are treasures here, deserted treasures. Where is the wrong of hunting them?"

Still Don Pedro shook his head. Presently he remarked: "*Y una iglesia grande al norte.*"

"He says," explained the mate, "that there's the ruins of a big old church up in the forest to the north, that the Spaniards built, but that all the other ruins are of the Indian houses and sacred places. I wish we had



ANCIENT WATCH-TOWER.

time to explore; but we won't, John, not till we get back from your search. We'll fit up the long-boat this very day, and start to-morrow."

"There's good huntin' here; droves and droves of wild hogs—peccaries, he calls them—and plenty of deer," complained Tom. "Confound your search, I say, John."

Presently, book in hand, John drew the mate aside. "It's mighty interesting reading—this old book is—here on the very spot, so to speak. Now do you suppose that underground room we were in last night could be one of those old Indian sacred places? I read here that this whole island of Cozumel was a *holy place*; that the Indians from all over Yucatan came here to worship a goddess called the Swallow Goddess. I judge that their adoratory was built after the very fashion of the ruin we buried the money in last night. What do you think?"

"This is a bunkum old island, no doubt!" said the mate thoughtfully. "Probably a good place to see sights and hear sounds. You better call the Mexican."

Don Pedro was called, and after hearing John's query, he whispered with a side glance at Tom, "*Si*

es el mismo—it is the same. Once all the Indians of this great region venerated that chapel, but now they believe it held by a spirit, and are afraid to enter it or even approach it. That is why," added he significantly, "I bury my treasure there."

The day was spent in fitting and loading the boat. Even the idle, jovial Tom worked with a will. They furnished it with a month's provisions; guns and revolvers for the four; with abundance of ammunition; and the mate passed the evening in making rough knapsacks of oiled canvas to contain their necessary equipments when on the march. John's chief care was given to his sketching materials and preservatives for the bird skins. A goodly sum of money in gold was distributed amongst the four, stuffed into leather money-belts which Don Pedro furnished, and which were buckled about their waists under their clothing.

"All aboard!" called the mate next morning, long before the sun had looked over the forest that surrounded the lake. "Now's the time if we want to git out in the channel before the breeze gits up. Tom and John, you two take the oars. Don Pedro'll steer, and I'll h'ist sail soon's we're clear of the p'int yonder."

They rowed slowly over the calm lake, leaving behind the little cabin to which they hoped to return in a month, with no living thing about it except a few half-wild fowls and two fish-hawks circling high above in the air. The turn at the entrance to the sea hid the cocoa grove, and they entered the rougher waters of the channel. Before them, dim in the distance, lay the coast of Yucatan. The point at which they were to spend the night was exactly southwest of Cozumel, where there was a sheltered bay in the rockbound coast; and sixty miles below that lay the deep bay where they hoped to find some remains at least of the almost legendary wreck. It was only thirty miles in a straight line to their first port. They were half-way over long before noon, the boat behaving beautifully and sailing



ALTAR AND SCULPTURE AT TULOOM.

swiftly with a fresh breeze on her quarter. Tom had stationed himself at the bows, and the rest sat aft; and it was about noon when they were interrupted

in their labored Spanish conversation by a shout from the boy :

"Say! Hurrah! Glory! All hands look here! There's a castle! a real lord's house! bet it's old England herself; and I can see great buildings of stone shining through the trees white as snow. Good! We shall see some people now!"



ALTAR AND IDOL.

"No," said Don Pedro quickly, "*es despo-blado*—it is uninhabited."

John had sprung to his feet. He looked land-

ward, with his heart in his eyes. For a moment all was illusion. Could these beautiful white gleaming walls be the walls of the Silver City? It was but for a moment. He sat down, smiling at himself for a romantic boy instead of a sensible traveller. Did not the book say the Silver City was far inland? And this was a town on the sea wall itself. Still again, did not this visible wonder make other wonders very probable indeed? As Don Pedro talked, John felt surer than at any time before, that all he came to find was a reality and within reach.

"*El castillo.*" The castle, as Don Pedro called it, stood upon a high cliff, against the base of which beat the great sea waves. It was pierced with loopholes, and had battlements and turrets; but no mailed face looked through the openings, and no dark-skinned sentry paced the lonely battlements. They ran into a protected cove unchallenged; and, bringing the boat up to the rocks where she lay in still water, anchored her head and stern, and climbed ashore.

"This is Tuloom," said Don Pedro, "an ancient Indian city built hundreds of years ago, perhaps a thousand. Nobody lives here now. Sometimes the *Sublevados*—the unconquered savages—come here to hunt; but not now; it is not their season."

They carried up the solitary rocks all they needed with which to make camp, and then devoted the afternoon to an exploration of the ruins. They found a great wall of stone surrounding a large area, in which were temples and tombs, and ruins of buildings spacious enough to have once been palaces.

John, like a born archæologist, at once set to making surveys and measurements, notes and sketches.

The *castillo* itself was one hundred feet broad, and there were other buildings almost as large. In the centre was a group of massive stone houses, built on the summit of a high mound, and reached by a grand stone staircase. Over its doorways were sculptured figures, and the walls were decorated with carved men and animals. The doors were so low that they had to crouch to enter; but when inside they found themselves in a room forty feet long by twenty wide, and fifteen feet high, with a triangular arched ceiling.

Referring to the low doorway, Don Pedro said there was a tradition that these buildings were erected for the dwarfs and hunchbacks who once lived in Yucatan—*Los Chiquititos*—the very little people; and promised to sometime tell the story of their origin, and how they once inhabited an island north of Cozumel.

Many sculptured altars were scattered about through the forest; and on a corner of the wall rose the ancient watch-tower, while before the principal house was the *senote*, or cavern, from which they once drew water.

The explorers took possession of the large room of the castle. They built a fire in it as night came on; and the boys mightily enjoyed the novel prospect of sleeping in a thousand-year-old castle in the forest.

Don Pedro chanced to go into the farther end of the great room before they finally stretched themselves on the floor to sleep. Suddenly they heard a loud exclamation. The next moment he came rushing back to the fire.

"The *red hand*!" said he in a trembling voice; "it is there on the wall!"



RUINED TEMPLE.

Wondering, the three went and looked where the Mexican directed. To their surprise they each saw it too; the imprint of a hand on the wall as though it had been dipped in blood. They could scarcely credit the evidence of their matter-of-fact American eyes, and they looked again; but there the rude imprint surely was, and whether freshly painted, or an old fresco, John could not decide. He, for one, had no fear that it was a phantom hand. Still much excited and disagreeably impressed were they all.

Don Pedro had gone outside. They could hear him pacing up and down the corridor.

The moon was in its last quarter, and but feebly lighted up the groups of ruins; but as John joined him, he chanced to look out of the low doorway, and he saw, or thought he saw, a dusky figure skulking behind an altar, and another creeping behind a tree.

For a moment he stood still in astonishment. But Don Pedro had seen them also. He grasped John's arm. He whispered sharply:

"The red hand is not for naught! and those are the *Sublevados!*" With that he darted within, drawing John with him.

THE NIGHT IN TULOOM.

CHAPTER V.



ON PEDRO'S first impulse as he plunged under the low doorway, was to alarm the others at once and hurry them down to the boat; but the bright fire blazing in the room in contrast to the

gloom without, the array of firearms and his own natural fearlessness when unswerved by superstitious influences, soon exerted their calming power. He paused before the fire as if in deep thought. He lifted his eyes at last and turned resolutely toward the dusky red hand upon the wall. He felt a slight shudder, as any mortal classed among Spaniards well might. But yet this hand of threat and warning was probably limned there centuries ago, and the dusky shades flitting without might be wholly ignorant of its presence there. At any rate four cool, well-armed men, on the alert, might defy scores of wild savages. He glanced at John who stood near him in an anxious, waiting attitude, with a quiet, reassuring smile.

With a touch on the shoulder he beckoned the mate aside. These two men were totally different in nationality, speech and nature; the one with the hot blood of the Spaniard seething along his veins, and the other with the cool and self-possessed temperament of the North American. The man of Spanish birth much admired the sturdy, slow-moving strength of the Northerner, much respected his quiet decisions. With his penetrating eye well upon him, he now hastily laid before him his fears, and his reasons for fears.

The mate listened to Don Pedro's statements without interruption, unless a low, short, underbreath whistle now and then might be taken as comment.

"Yes, señor," he said at last, "just so. You're right to be alarmed; all the same, I don't see's

there's any necessity of vacating the premises. We'll be on the alert, that's all. Perhaps we better tell both the boys, so as they can comport themselves properly as 'twere."

"*Por su puesto* — of course" — replied Don Pedro.

"My young friends," said the mate, assuming a bantering tone to hide the real depth of his concern as he returned to his place by the fire, "our elderly guide here, thinks there's a right smart chance of our bein' gobbled by the sociable inhabitants of this new country. He thinks that though they've had no notice of our movin' in, they'll prob'ly give us a regul'r house-warmin', and air waitin' just outside for that there purpose. He ain't seen nothin' definit, to be sure, but thinks we'd better be a lookin' out. Now the question is," he went on, not regarding Tom's big, terrified eyes, "shall we stay up here all night, or retreat to the boat best as we can? I'd like the voice of the meetin' on that pint."

Consulting together, Tom's voice being but a shiver and a groan, however, they concluded, when they considered the difficult climbing over the cliff by night, and the probability of lurking, following Indians, that it would be better to wait until daylight under cover, where they could act in concert.

They were now too excited to sleep, although the mate advised that two of the party should lie down while the other two kept watch.

"Sleep!" growled Tom, "d' you think I can lay down and sleep when there's a chance for an Injun to be feelin' 'round for my scalp? No, sir! I prefer to be awake and see how it's done."

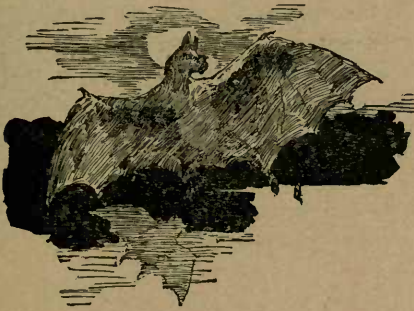
"My son, I feel some so myself," replied the mate; "therefore we'll all bear a hand at this watchin' out, my hearties. Le's see now! We've got all our weepins here, ain't we, John? Le'me see! a revolver apiece all around, two rifles and a shotgun, besides knives and sich, and plenty of catridges and powder. Better put the fire out, Mr. Peter."

But the Mexican was sure it had already been seen and could do no further harm. "But," suggested he, "we may push those burning logs up in

the corner near the door, where it will light up the entrance and leave us in gloom."

This suggestion was acted upon, and the group drew away into the farther darkness, where they huddled together on their blankets.

It will be remembered that they were in a room



INHABITANTS OF TULOOM.

which was forty feet long, and fifteen high, the walls, roof and floor of solid stone. There was but one entrance, the square doorway near the end, and but

three other openings, small slits, or loopholes, cut in the wall, high up, overlooking the sea. Had they anticipated trouble and chosen a place to withstand a siege they could not have selected a stronger point; but as they had not foreseen this they had brought only a little food from the boat, and had little water.

There was a "shivering sense of danger," as Tom put it, in the possibility of an attack, but it can't be denied that John, at least, rather enjoyed it as he looked about and saw himself surrounded by strong walls and felt his own good New England rifle in his hand. Could the doorway but have been barricaded, he would have dared the Sublevados of all Yucatan. The only shadow on his fearless mood was a remorseful feeling that it was his own personal adventure that had led his companions into this possible danger; and presently he began to consider some way of pursuing his journey and his quest alone, without involving his friends farther.

Over their heads they could trace the mystical fresco that had excited Don Pedro's fears; and now the mate asked for its meaning.

"*Quien sabe*—who knows"—replied he, shrugging his shoulders; "it has probably been there these thousand years. It is found in all these ruins. All same, I shudder when I look upon it. It means death to the Spaniard. The tradition is that it is death that day or night it is looked upon for the first time by a stranger. Perhaps not to the stranger himself, but to some one within the ruins at the time. So when I saw it with my three friends all

strangers, and later thought I saw the savages, I was sorry much that I had brought you here. There are many red hands, and many times have I seen them, but not with strangers ever before."

They looked upward with strange feelings, despite their Yankee hard sense; and Tom moved a little nearer the centre of the group.

"It does look 's though it was stretched out to clutch you, don't it?" said he.

Crowds of bats flew through the darkness of the high arched ceiling, and among them vampires as large as pigeons flapped their hideous wings. Every time they swooped from their dark hiding-places, the Americans dodged, and put up their hands to protect their heads. Don Pedro alone was insensible to their presence. He sat grasping his rifle, his eyes on the flickering fire near the doorway. The wind howled outside, the moon had become obscured, and a storm beat upon the sea-wall, blowing through the loop-holes chill and freezing.

Don Pedro shook himself from his reverie. "These savages," said he, "are fierce and bloodthirsty. I love not to think they stand outside. They are the unconquered Indians who never submitted to the Spaniards. We call them Sublevados, or rebels, and they hate us of Spanish blood with undying hatred. They may have had cause, in those times when Yucatan was first conquered; but though that is more than three hundred years ago, they hate us still. They kill every Spaniard that comes into their country. Sometimes at once; but oftener they save him for the torture. I knew a man—*probrecito*—they tortured; they played *toro* with him."

"And that?" demanded his heroes in whispers.

"Why, a bull-fight; they put a ring through his

nose, tied him to a stake, and then pierced him with their spears and shot arrows into him."



NATURAL FOES.

This he had uttered slowly, Mr. Walker and John translating aloud. Tom grew sick at heart, and evidently John and the mate loved not "to think of them as standing outside."

"Hark!" whispered the mate. "I hear a noise;

somebody's sartin outside the steps." They listened; there was, without mistake, a confused movement like the soft treading of many feet.

With straining eyes, the four inmates of the room watched the doorway, lighted by the glowing fire-brands, each one grasping gun or rifle.

Presently the mate touched John on the shoulder. There was something coming through the aperture. Another second, and the flickering light from the coals showed the head and shoulders of a man.

"Halt!" Don Pedro shouted in Spanish. "Who is it?"

The figure made no reply, but crouched on the floor, still moved slowly in; others were behind—they inside could hear the smothered voices.

"Can't understand Spanish," muttered the Mexican under his breath. "Who are you?" he added aloud in Maya, the language of the Sublevados.

No answer, but the forms retreated. Soon a voice outside cried in Spanish to those within: "*Amigos!*"

"What do you want?" answered Don Pedro.

"To go in and talk with you."

"You can't."

"*We will*; we are *amigos*—friends!"

"How many are you?"

"We are more than a hundred."

"One may come in; one only."

"*Bien!*—I, then, will come in."

"Only one; more only at their peril."

"Beware, now!" whispered Don Pedro hurriedly.

"Watch the doorway with your guns; if more come in, shoot! If you hesitate, they can kill us all!"

A tall form now stood erect by the fire, the feeble blaze lighting up his massive frame and showing a knife gleaming in one hand.

"Friend, what wish you?"

Without answer, the stranger blew a shrill whistle, and sprang suddenly in the direction of Don Pedro's voice. The beleaguered four as yet had the advantage, being in darkness; but a moment of hesitation would have lost their lives, for the doorway was now choked with forms struggling to get inside.

Bang! bang! bang! The dark mass ceased to advance. Howls of pain and rage testified that the shots had been effective.

Don Pedro was struggling with his treacherous *amigo*. He had evaded the spring, but had fallen upon the slippery stone floor, and before he could rise, the Indian was well upon him. No word escaped either. Fiercely they fought, each straining

every muscle; the one to use his knife, the other to arrest the blow.

"Guard the door, you two fellows with your revolvers! I can't stand this!" cried the mate, rushing upon the writhing forms in the corner. He might have received that knife himself, but he threw himself recklessly upon them, feeling for the naked body of the Indian. A deep groan told him that one was hurt; but he had the Indian by the throat, and quickly bent and held his arms to the floor. It was not the Indian that was harmed, for he could struggle like a giant, and all the strength that lay in the mate's massive body was needed.



DON PEDRO AND THE TREACHEROUS "AMIGO."

to hold him down; but at last the iron grip on the tower-like throat began to tell, and finally the savage lay quiet.

Nor did Don Pedro move. The mate after becoming satisfied that the Indian was harmless, released his hold and moved over to raise his friend; but a new stir at the doorway called him back; the bodies had been drawn out, and a fresh horde now dashed at the opening.

"Revolvers again!" shouted John. "Let 'em have it, Tom!"

An outburst of cries followed the discharge, but the desperate creatures still pressed in, only desisting

when the passage was again blocked by the slain.

"That's it, my sons!" cried the mate; "shoot as they come, but not a needless shot. We don't want to kill 'em, as I know of, only so far as to keep them from killin' us. Watch out again, while I see about Mr. Peter here."

"You come here!" cried John, "and let me go to him. I must!"

"All right; only keep your eyes about you. That Indian ain't wholly dead, I suspicion."

John lit a match and held it low to the face of his good friend who now lay so quiet there. It was deathly pale, but his heart beat; he was unconscious, but not dead. Blood flowed from a cut in one arm, and in his right temple; but his present unconscious state John thought resulted from the concussion when his head struck the stone floor.

With hasty chafing and a dash from the Mexican's own brandy-flask, he soon had the gladness of seeing the heavy eyes open, and a look of recognition flash upon him. He was hurriedly binding up the wounded arm, when another arm—a naked one—was thrown about him, and he was drawn within the suffocating clasp of the Indian, who also had returned to consciousness.

John's own resistance was vain; but Don Pedro, feeling swiftly over the floor, found the knife the savage had dropped, and thrusting it against his breast, was about to end the matter, when the brawny fellow released his hold, and cried for quarter.

"No!" hissed the Mexican. "My turn this time."

"Don't, Don Pedro!" gasped John, regaining his breath by a mighty effort. "Let us simply bind him, and hold him captive, and so buy our way out."

"Oh, kill me, if you like! my people are here, plenty, to avenge my death!" scoffed the Indian in fierce Spanish, evidently ashamed that he had begged quarter.

"No, tie him!" said John.

They dragged him forward to the fire, and the mate set about binding his arms. The Indian was passive; they thought him weakened by loss of blood. But he was gathering his energies up; suddenly, in one lightning-like leap, he was on his feet; another, and he had darted through the doorway.

For a moment they were alone. The mate picked himself up from the corner into which the Indian had tossed him, and pulled Tom away from the coals near which he had been tumbled in that desperate leap for freedom.

"Hear 'em yell!" growled Tom. "I'd give all I'm worth to be back on Don Peter's green little island. It's ten times wus'n a shipwreck."

He had followed orders without a word, and had fired wherever he saw a head; but now, in the first silence, he gave way. War was not the young cook's forte.

"Patience!" said Don Pedro in a changed, cheery voice; "we will presently escape."

"How escape?"

Four walls and a solid roof, the only entrance watched by probably a hundred Indians. They regarded the Mexican wonderingly.

"I know these ruins," said Don Pedro; "I believe that it is in this one that there is an underground passage to the sea. Keep them back long enough for me to feel round for the stone that covers it, and if it is here, as I believe, we are safe. Strange I did not think of it before."

This guard was an easy matter, for the Indians no longer tried to enter. They could sit down and wait. The besieged must emerge sometime. They crouched in the quadrangle outside, behind pillars, in the black shadows of ruined altars, like famished wolves at the door of a sheepfold.

Groping in the dark, the Mexican found, so soon as he expected, the rough edge of the slab that covered an opening. Exerting all their strength, he and the mate silently lifted and laid it aside. A strong current of air blew out of the aperture.

"It is from the sea!" whispered Don Pedro joyfully.

Then, in the silence, they disputed hastily and stealthily as to who should *not* go in first. The post of danger was behind; each insisted upon taking it; even Tom. At last Don Pedro led the way, dropping noiselessly down into the passage. The mate next, Tom and John were to follow.

"It's my adventure," said John. "I take the risk."

Before he entered he crept back to the door and peered out. An arrow or two flew by him. But no demonstration was made toward storming the entrance. Satisfied as to their plan, he dropped into the hole. It was dark and damp; the rocks were slimy; every step was a slippery one. But the way led to the sea and the boat!

His companions had paused for him and now they all groped their way downward and onward. Little was said. Each knew it was the push for life.

At last they reached a narrow opening; hitherto they

had been able to stand erect, but now the passage narrowed like the neck of a bottle and descended rapidly. "Slowly now, and carefully," said Don Pedro.

He slid in. The mate followed. Both landed on their feet upon a ledge and in sight of the sea. But as they struck, a deafening noise roared in their ears; the wall overhead seemed to fall behind them. They looked back; an immense boulder in some way jarred from its poise by their descent, had fallen into the passage and was so firmly wedged no human power could move it.

"Boys, we can't help you. Don Pedro says it's capture for you. He says, don't make no resistance and they won't harm you. Don Pedro knows 'em; they will keep you a month, not less'n a month, before they will hurt a hair of your heads; then"—

"I know!" returned John in the voice of one who had resolved that death was now to be faced without flinching. "They will sacrifice us as an offering to their gods! However, as you won't forget us, mate, we won't give up."

"Say you won't, Mr. Walker!" added Tom, "an' I



"SENOR CAPITAN, SOMOS AMERICANOS!"

They were probably safe—but the boys? *As in a tomb!* Their advance was cut off and a horde of savages were in their rear, for they could hear them swarming into the apartment above, warned by the noise of the escape of their prisoners.

Both men were almost stupefied by this sudden calamity. Presently the mate's voice reached the boys. "Boys, are you hurt? Are you alive?"

John answered him; they were alive, and unhurt. Then the mate's voice came again full of agony.

won't give up either. We'll expect you afore the month's out, shan't we?"

"So long's we live, Don and I'll follow on your trail," said the mate's voice again. "Tom, John, we've got to go now; the fiends are swarmin' over the cliffs and down to the boat, the Don says. It's to be good-by now."

"Adios, my sons! Look out for us again. Don't resist; they will not kill you. *Adios!*" Don Pedro spoke last, then all was still.

But the silence about the two boys was again soon broken. There was the report of a revolver, then another, then the outcry of wounded Indians. Then another period of silence, after which the fall of oars and a shout told them their companions had reached the boat and were probably safe.

"John," said Tom, as they held each other's hands in the fresh silence of the dismal cavern, "don't you feel bad for me. I know what's likely you're thinkin' of. It's likely you're a-thinkin' of me. But I ain't afraid to go wherever you do. Now shall we shoot 'em as they come down on us as long as we can?"

"No, Tom, we'll do nothing to enrage them. We can only try to get back to the room and give ourselves up since it must end in that anyway, unless indeed we are shot down at once. I am sorry, Tom, that any business of mine brought you into this trap."

"Never you mind me, Johnny North! I get my fun as I go along. I wish we's somewhere else, but seein's we ain't, what's the use?"

John was beginning to think there was better stuff in Tom than he had thought, and that he might not prove so bad a comrade after all, when a light suddenly danced above them, between them and the aperture. It must be the savages; but without exchanging a word they followed it, went towards it, slipping, falling, till they reached the bright opening in the floor.

John thrust his head up at once, not knowing but it might be taken off at a blow; then he passed out his gun, which was seized by the bearer of the torch. A dozen hands roughly aided him to regain the room, and they did the same for Tom as he appeared.

It cannot be affirmed that they did not quake as they faced the throng of Indians filling the room, keeping ominous silence, the red light from the torches playing on their scowling faces: But both had prepared themselves for the worst, and they met the fierce creatures with bold front.

But there was no haste, no threats. Their arms were taken from them, and they were led outside. Here in the corridor stood the chief of the band, a tall, sinewy man of bronze, with long black hair and a piercing eye. John started, for he was the same who had first entered the room, the same with whom both the Mexican and the mate had fought.

He stood facing the west, and the moon being in that portion of the heavens, threw upon him a feeble light from between the storm-clouds, and John was calm enough to observe him closely. He wore, after

the fashion of the ancient Mayas—the primitive people of Yucatan—a cincture about his loins, and a short *manta*, or blanket, upon his shoulders, sandals of deer-skin bound to his feet by hempen thongs, and a short garment of feather-work about his waist and hips. His hair was cut short in front and gathered upon his head from the sides in a sort of coronet, or crown, hanging long behind. He grasped a bow taller than himself, and a ponderous war-club, while his quiver full of arrows hung upon his back, and a gleaming knife was suspended from his girdle. Portions of his body and his massive legs were naked, and as he stood, wholly motionless, it looked as if this barbaric attire might have been hung upon a noble statue of bronze, except that his eyes sparkled as he beheld his prisoners before him.

"About as fine as they make them!" reflected John, appreciating the grand physique of the man.

In ranks loosely formed, his men now gathered around their chief, naked, except for cincture and sandals, and with long hair falling down their backs. They like him were armed with bows and arrows, with spears, and the ancient two-edged sword, or battle-axe, of wood edged with sharpened flints.

There they stood, this remnant of a people celebrated in antiquity, amid the ruins of the temples of their ancestors, ready at order to punish these two adventurers for invading their sacred precincts. In spite of danger John could but look on it all as a part of the pageantry of his romantic dreams made real.

The chief at last motioned them to stand before him. His eyes emitted fierce rays as they approached; and John was well aware that many a hand clutched the bow as he and Tom passed along the ranks.

The chief alone could speak Spanish; his people only Maya, the Indian tongue. He accosted them.

"Why are you here?"

"We have come," replied John, "to see your country, to see its birds, its people, and its wonderful cities. We are but peaceful scientific explorers."

A moment the chief eyed him wrathfully.

"*Caramba!* Explorers! To explore my country! I am Christobal, Chief of the Sublevados! My castle is Chan Santa Cruz. Never yet have I spared a Spaniard's life, and yours shall not be the first I have offered to my gods. Ha! You did not speak of the gods! Do ye not want to see the gods of this country? Ye shall! Ye shall see the country, the birds, the people, the cities, the gods—and then *ye shall die!*"

A thought flashed through John's brain. He whispered it to Tom:

"They take us for Spaniards, the enslavers of their race. It is possible they have different feelings toward Americans."

He spoke up boldly: "*Señor Capitan, somos Americanos!*" — "Your Excellency, we are Americans!"

Christobal stepped forward. He gazed at their weather-bronzed faces doubtfully.

"*Como?* How? not Spaniards? Americans?"

He turned to his followers and rapidly translated the meaning of that magic word. The effect was electrical. The dusky throng leaped to its feet as one man. They poured out a prolonged strange cry:

"*Quetzalcoatl! Quetzalcoatl!*"

The chief nodded approvingly. His men sank again to the ground, but now no longer regarding the boys vindictively, but smiling, and conversing excitedly amongst themselves. The chief advanced. He placed his hands on the boys' shoulders. He looked at them piercingly, but not unkindly.

"From the north? Ye came from the north? whence the white-winged canoes come down to trade with our coast? From the Snow King's home?"

"*Si, Señor Capitan.*"

"Then you are my sons. Ye are children of Quetzalcoatl. This land is yours!"

Speaking thus, he gathered his unwilling sons to his breast in a hearty embrace. They submitted, too amazed to speak; but Tom was not at all grateful for this turn of affairs.

"See here now!" he said afterwards. "I was a little shaky when they all glared at us so, and I thought our hour had come; but, hang it all! I'd rather they'd knock me on the head than give me one of their family embraces!"

And now the scene and atmosphere changed rapidly. It was one thing to be a Spaniard, quite another to be a North American. At Christobal's command, his men prepared a soft couch in a sheltered portion of the corridor, of the silky down of the *ceiba*, or the silk cotton-tree, elastic as eider down. Upon this were spread *mantas*. Then the weary men were politely bidden to lie down and rest. They obeyed, wondering what would happen next. But it was nearly daylight when they fell asleep, and broad sunlight spread over the forest when they opened their eyes some hours later.

As soon as it was found they were awake, two olive-skinned boys hurried to their side, each with a

cup of coffee and a basin of water fragrant with the wild bay leaves floating in it. Kneeling, and with every sign of respect, they offered their service to the young strangers, and when they had bathed gave them a handful of *pita* fiber to dry the moisture.

Then they hastened away and soon returned with their arms full of clothing. There were two full suits belonging to the boys themselves (which they evidently had brought up from the boat). These they placed on one side of the couch. On the other they cast a heap of Indian fabrics, bright-colored blankets, leggings of deer skin embroidered with beads or feathers, *sarapes*, or blanket-shawls of gor-



AS MAYAS. — TOM AND JOHN SURVEYING EACH OTHER.

geous coloring ornamented with silver braid and buttons; sandals made with nicest care, and to be secured by the softest of deer-skin thongs.

It was the garb of civilization and the garb of a semi-barbaric people. By signs they offered the young men their choice.

The boys looked from one pile to the other. Tom broke the silence first. "John, these Injuns are a-tryin' us. This is to see whether we will go with them of our own free will, or whether we ain't true sons and still hanker after the region of the Snow King, as they call him. And there may be more dependin' on the choice than we think. I motion we take their toggery, and be big Injuns too."

"That's about the level of the thing, I guess," said John, "and you're right; we may as well go in for whatever fun there is in it. On with the togger!"

With the assistance of their two Indian valets, they dressed themselves as Mayas. The moment they were left alone, they turned upon each other, restrain-

ing their laughter, however, as fully as possible. Tom, with his round rosy face was specially "jolly" with a bright scarlet blanket hanging around him, his head thrust through a hole in the centre, a girdle of tiger skin about his waist and leggings shining with silver bells and buttons.

"Oh, look at home now, you young Injun,"

said he at last; "you don't seem to realize that your arms are bare and that you haven't half clos' enough to cover you anyway! Come now! Hullo! what now?"

Their pages were approaching with small calabashes in their hands containing different colored paints.

"Blamed if they ain't *going to paint us!*"

Yes, verily; but the boys winked at each other and submitted. First their valets coated whatever portions of the body were not covered by the *sarape* and leggings with *roucon*, or a pigment from the annatto berry; then they proceeded, as Tom expressed it, "to do the ornamental," by drawing various colored stripes across their cheeks and foreheads.

Tom could hardly contain himself while all this was gravely going on; and as soon as the toilet was completed, he sank down, overcome with silent laughter, while the tears ran down his cheeks so fast as to threaten to wash away all his decorations.

"O John!" he whispered, "I'd give a dollar if you could see yourself! You look just like the tattooed man in Barnum's. You only want a little red on your nose to be a first-class aurora borealis."

John could but laugh as he gazed at Tom for a reflection of his own probable appearance; he felt the process of adoption was rather more picturesque than was needful. Still the question of the good faith of the adoption was enough to sober him.

"Hello!" said he; "here they come again. And, Tom, they are going to trust us with our pistols and guns. That looks well."

During these slow toilet processes the Indians had kept in the background; but now Chief Christobal advanced and embraced them, wishing them good-morning, and gazing upon them admiringly. John's fine figure really showed well in the Maya costume, and the chief patted him on the shoulder affectionately, "*Bien, hijo mio!* — well done, my son."

Now that it was daylight they saw more fully what a magnificent man was this chief of the Sublevados. He was over six feet in height, and both face and figure were handsome. His men were rather under medium height, but robust and well-shaped. Their countenances were not ferocious; they indicated tempers fiery and strong, but held in check. They had buried their dead during the night, and only the presence of the wounded, and some blood-stains on the stone floor, told of the desperate struggle. Christobal showed no traces of the mate's mighty grip on his throat. But the boys were touched when they saw the wounded lying helplessly about. John examined one after another, wishing for the box of medicines he had placed in the boat when they left Cozumel. Christobal watched both his movements and his face attentively. Presently he sent some men down the cliff.

When they returned, they bore not only the box of medicines, but nearly all the boat had contained.

The boys looked at each other in dismay. Had the boat, had the mate and Don Pedro been captured!

Christobal laid his hand on John's shoulder. Smiling, he beckoned them to follow. He took them to the top of the watch-tower, pointed out a shining speck in the sunlight, a white sail far over toward Cozumel.

With wondrous kindness for a savage, Christobal explained how their companions escaped by shooting two Indians, who had found the boat, and had removed nearly everything from it, and then cutting the moor-



MAYA WOMEN.



GRINDING CORN FOR TORTILLAS.

ings, and pushing beyond reach of the pursuers coming over the cliff.

Both the wounded and the well displayed gratitude as John and Tom went to and fro dressing wounds. John felt almost sure they had now their good will.

Breakfast was next offered them. In a remote building, two of the Maya women had been busy preparing corn-cakes, and baking them over a quick fire. They crushed the corn upon a flat stone, by rolling over it a round one, until it was almost as fine as flour. Then they quickly made a paste, and spreading it thinly over another hot stone, quickly baked it. These were the famous *tortillas*, the corn-bread that these people have prepared in the same manner for hundreds of years. These cakes were now brought on palm leaves, and placed upon an altar-top. A savory stew of deer meat and wild turkey was also set before them, served in bowls made of calabash shells.

Christobal explained during the repast, that being a war party they were without much provisions, and promised better things when they should arrive at his stronghold, which was several days' march, and which he was going to start for at once. He and the boys only "ate at the first table," and by observing him they soon managed to eat Mexican fashion, without knife or fork. A tortilla served as a plate—being flat, broad and round—on this they placed meat, beans or chilé, and ate it by means of a piece of another tortilla rolled up like a spoon. When through, Christobal ate his spoon and then his plate. Following his example, the board was literally cleared. Orders were issued to break camp at once.

Long before noon all was in readiness. A group

of men approached with two rude palanquins, or litters, made by stretching elastic vines between a framework of poles, over which was a roof of light poles thatched with leaves. A layer of palm leaves at the bottom made a springy mattress, and a roll of *mantas* a pillow. Tom and John were assisted each into his *litera*, which four men took upon their shoulders, and the line of march was begun. Ahead went men with *machetes*, or great knives, to cut the way, and behind them marched the dusky warriors. Chief Christobal was borne in front in another *litera*. The wounded were behind similarly conveyed.

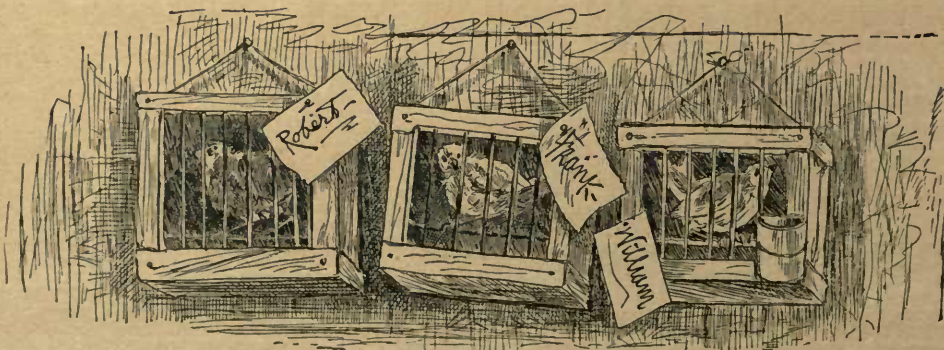
Tom actually chuckled aloud with delight. "John, we're right along in the procession, ain't we?" he called back.

But John, alone now to reflect, was not so light of heart. Despite the change in the manner of the Indians, he saw no positive assurance that they were not two victims intended for sacrifice. He well knew from books, that such victims were not looked upon with hate, but rather with good will; and he saw in the homage paid them, a possible omen of danger. They certainly were prisoners, though with willing servitors as captors. All that long, hot day, as they travelled through the steaming forest, this question tortured him:

"What do they mean to do with us?"



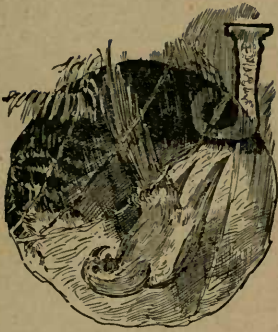
MAYA COOKING UTENSILS.



THREE HAPPY PRISONERS.

A GREAT MAGICIAN.

CHAPTER VI.



YELLOW MACAW.

JOHN NORTH was not a coward. He was serious, reflective, and, despite his many romantic dreams and projects, he instinctively weighed both sides of a question. Once having made up his mind, no danger could deter him from carrying out a plan. But he felt uneasy, remorseful, because his

search for his father had drawn others into trouble so serious.

To be sure Tom's jolly view of the situation somewhat relieved him. He experienced a constant surprise at the way Tom accepted anything seen to be inevitable. "Hang sorrow, care will kill a cat," seemed to be Tom's motto. He would not listen to John's apprehensions.

"Pshaw, John," he laughed: "don't go to borrowing trouble. Just you look at things as they actually are, not as they might, could, would or should be. Here we be carried along like princes on the shoulders of men who are appointed our slaves. Just look at 'em, smilin' up at us whenever we condescend to look their way. How long'd you have to live Down East before the people'd turn out and wheel yer in a wheelbarrow, let alone a-totin' you on their shoulders! It's a shame to slander these Injuns, even in your heart. I'm ready to fight *for* 'em instid of against 'em. The late onpleasantness was simply because they didn't know who we were."

"Perhaps I ought to be ashamed of distrust," said John with a faint smile. "But it wasn't on my own account, Tom."

"Well, you chirk up, then. I'm goin' to be happy till I see the executioner comin' for me with his knife, and then I'll bet I'll manage to trip him up and offer him to his own idols. Besides," continued Tom,

"they've given us all our weapons; you've got your gun and revolver, and I my pistol and rifle, and all the cartridges we want. In fact, I think they are rather timorous about our guns lying about anyway. They've got nothing theirselves but spears and bows and arrers. We're the dangerous party at present, I take it. Le's think of something else. Say! how about your stuffin' birds? Your institute work don't come on very fast, does it?"

"No," said John. "We've just been hurried from one accident to another all the time."

"Well," said Tom shrewdly, "I should say you might improve this 'ere present accident. All your stuffin' things are here, for them Injuns have saved everything of ours, and are bringing 'em along as if they was sacred."

"Tom, you're right. Even if I can't save the specimens I preserve, it will be a diversion. It will give us something to think about."

They were journeying in a vast forest. It was open underneath, and the sunlight lighted it even down to the flat coral rock that forms all the understratum of Yucatan, upon which the giant trees spread their roots. It was a lively scene to a naturalist's eye. Every tree and bush seemed to contain a new bird or butterfly. John observed many orioles like our golden robin, only brighter and more worthy the name of "fire bird;" and instead of one species, he noted half a dozen. There were few familiar birds, but before the day waned he counted hundreds new and strange. Their Indian pages, bright-eyed, tawny-skinned striplings of sixteen, who ran by the side of their litters, delighted

in pronouncing the names of both birds and trees. They spoke in Maya, a musical tongue, but John wrote down the distinctly uttered names. He was particularly interested in the *cha-cha-la-ka*, a bird like our



THE CAT CARE KILLED.

ruffled grouse, but smaller, and with a longer tail; the Mayas must have named it from its cry. It was very



CARRIED ALONG LIKE PRINCES.

shy, and would wait till they were quite near, then fly away with a great rattle of *cha-cha-la-ka! cha-cha-la-ka!*

All John's old-time longing for new hunting-fields and new specimens, came strong upon him. "Tom," he cried excitedly, "I must get some of these birds. The Professor would be delighted with them: we may pass out of their region and I miss them thus!"

Tom was overjoyed to see his comrade's wakening interest. "If I was you," said he, "I'd shoot some as I went along and then skin and stuff 'em when we make a halt. At the worst, they'll only be to throw away, and you *may* get them through."

John was a good shot. His long collecting practice in the New England woods had perfected his aim. The neighbors had always said that when John North sighted a bird over a gun barrel, it was as good as dead. It is pleasant to know that he never "sighted" one as mere sportsman's pleasure.

This was the reason he had not shot birds on ship-board, when the sea-birds came about by hundreds; why he had not hunted in Cozumel: he could not

then preserve their skins properly for the museum.

A bright-banded parrot was chattering noisily in a tall tree-top. The procession was filing across an open glade. Without stopping the men, John raised himself in the *litera*, brought the gun to his shoulder, and fired.

The Indians were for a moment thrown into consternation. As they looked about for a reason for the shot, the parrot came tumbling down from his high perch, and fell into John's litter. It was a chance aim, a chance fall, but these dusky aborigines seemed to look upon the occurrence as supernatural.

They approached the young North American reverently. The bearers of his *litera*, at a sign from Christobal, lowered it to the ground.

John held up the parrot. It was stone dead. Christobal gave a low command to two Indians. They departed, ranging the woods. In ten minutes they returned. Christobal produced a small bronze cup. In it he placed the lumps of gum copal which the men had collected. This he lighted. A rich perfume stole forth. Three times the chief walked about John swinging his censer until the fragrant smoke enveloped him. The same ceremony was accorded Tom. Not a word was spoken. The *literas* were then lifted and the first march resumed.

"How'd you like that?" demanded Tom as soon as they were once more moving.

"Well, it's rather a novel sensation," said John, "to sit and have incense burned before you. But I remember reading in my old book about just such a performance when the Spaniards first landed on the shore of Yucatan, in 1517. For the first time in the New World they saw houses of stone, like those whose ruins we were in last night. The Indians came out to meet them, and before they would communicate with them, their priests fumigated them with incense just as these Indians—

their descendants—have done to us. It has never been settled whether they thought the Spaniards were



THE HOCO, ONE OF THE STRANGE BIRDS.

gods—as in the Bahamas—or whether they ought to be fumigated to render them fit for acquaintance.”

“Well, in our case, it’s probably gods,” laughed Tom. “I rather think they intend to set us up on pedestals and fall down and worship us, when they git us to their town. Hello!” he broke off.



WILD TURKEY.

“I say, John, look at them big birds running through the woods—there over to the right! big as turkeys—they *are* turkeys! where’s your gun? Halt the men! Let’s git down! Quick! there’s another!”

Christobal had noticed Tom’s gesticulations. He ordered a halt. He came to John’s side. John in his rude Spanish explained.

“My men will get you many,” said Christobal, smiling.

“I long to shoot one myself,” said John.

“*Bien*. This boy will show you where to find them. But your gun is not loaded.”

The chief evidently had seen only old-fashioned firearms, like those the English of Belize sold the Indians; never a breech-loader.

John had managed to slip a cartridge in unperceived—a paper shell loaded with large turkey shot. “Always loaded,” said he impressively, perceiving the chief’s ignorance.

Christobal repeated the words to his followers. All fell back in silence. They regarded the mysterious gun with an expression of mingled cautiousness and amazement.

One of the young Indians, at a signal from the chief, led the way the turkeys had gone, the whole band turning to look, waiting, wondering.

John had swung his game bag over his shoulders; his gun lay in the hollow of his arm. He followed the half-naked lad with long, eager strides. The chase stirred the blood in his veins. The Indian stopped, pointed; in sight was a flock with a great gobbler at the head, marching unsuspiciously along, flashing and shimmering like strange peacocks. John raised his double-barreled gun; a puff of smoke darted out, then a report. Two turkeys fell to the ground. The rest were all in the air in a second, whirring or else crashing through the underbrush, right across his path.

He turned, threw up the gun again, aimed a foot ahead of the swiftly-flying birds, and pulled the trigger. The leader fell like lead, right at Christobal’s feet, where it fluttered a moment, then lay still.

The Indians were astonished. What must he be who was endowed with a gun with two barrels, that loaded itself, that killed more than one bird at a time! and never before had they seen a bird shot on the wing. This young man must be nearly related to the powers of the air, if not one of them.

John could easily read all this on those unfeigning faces. Taking advantage of their amazement, with almost no perceptible movement, he slipped two more cartridges into his gun.

The reports had startled the turkeys in all directions, and they were flying wildly through the forest. Two noble birds came crashing and sparkling through the near tree-tops like meteors. They were most magnificent specimens weighing at least twenty pounds apiece. They were a rod apart. Up went the mysterious gun. The foremost doubled up like a crumpled paper at the report, and came whirling to the ground in a cloud of flashing feathers. Without turning his eye, or removing the gun from his shoulder, John fired the second barrel, and the other turkey followed in the track of the first. Then, while the smoke was yet curling from the muzzle, he drew out the exploded cartridges, and slipped in two more.

The entire band was thunderstruck. Christobal stood pressing his hand to his brow. Presently he gathered his *manta* about him, and with a majestic wave of his hand silenced the murmurs of admiration.

“My son, thou hast done what none in Maya has ever done before. Still I will risk the future—thine and mine. I have dared much for thee, thou wilt soon learn; thou art henceforward to be chief of a band of thy own. I, Christobal, will it so; here and now I appoint thee next in power and authority to myself.”

Turning, he singled out ten of the handsomest young men, tall, slender, with animated faces.

“These,” said he, “are thy body-guard. Night and day they will attend thee.”

The young men approached, one by one, and taking John’s right hand, each placed it upon his forehead, bowing to his feet.

The line of march was again formed. The body-guard with bows, arrows, clubs and spears, formed around the *litera* containing their young chief. Thus they travelled till late in the afternoon,

"See what you get by following my sage advice?" queried Tom when they were well under way. "If it hadn't been for me you wouldn't thought of your birds. And yit, here I'm left out in the cold, with no body-guard nor nothin'."

But John spoke gravely in reply: "Tom, all I get I will share with you."

"By the way," said Tom, "do you s'pose they s'picioned what's in the belts we had round our bodies when they saw us change our clo's for their war paint? And how much have we got?"

"I have no fear of their robbing us," said John. "We have a little over a hundred dollars apiece, in gold, besides a few bank bills that are of no use in this country. In fact, our gold is not good here; we are like Robinson Crusoe after he had all the gold in the ship, for nobody knows its value."

"Well, it will keep. I hope to see the time when we can spend it. But, John, why don't you ever talk! you ain't given up hopin' to find track of your father, have you?"

"Given him up! hardly, Tom."

"That's the talk, my young chief; now I want you to understand that I'm rather taken with that project myself. You've got that old book all safe, the *Conquest*, you know?"

"Safe in my haversack; and do you know, Tom, I think we are going *straight to the Silver City*! Why, I feel to-day as though we were almost a part of that old book! If I understand the region, we are certainly moving in its general direction."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Tom. "Shouldn't wonder at anything."

"It's just strange and wild enough to be true," said John. "And when I have learned more Spanish, or better yet, a little Maya, I shall inquire cautiously of the chief."

"So I would. It's pleasant enough being carried along this way, day after day, laying on our backs and safe as in our cradles, but still I'd like to know where we're going to fetch up, as the feller said when he'd tried the flyin'-machine and fell into the coward."

"Well," said John, "so long as we travel southwardly, and these Indians are friendly, I've no objection, for in that direction lies the city, if it lies anywhere."

In this manner they went on, chatting whenever the *litteras* came near together, and enjoying philosophically al' that came in their way. They made a

short stop about noon, but only to dip some water out of a *senote* and to munch some dry *tortillas*. Late in the afternoon they came to a place selected for camp. The *machete* bearers had gone ahead, and with their sharp knives had cleared of its underbrush a little knoll crowned with great trees. When the band arrived fires were blazing, and the *tortilla* women busy over their primitive mills grinding corn.

After their *litteras* had been placed on the ground, and their various luggage deposited near, John requested Christobal to allow him to skin the finest turkey before the cooks should have deprived the fowl of its feathers.

And why should John care for a turkey skin?

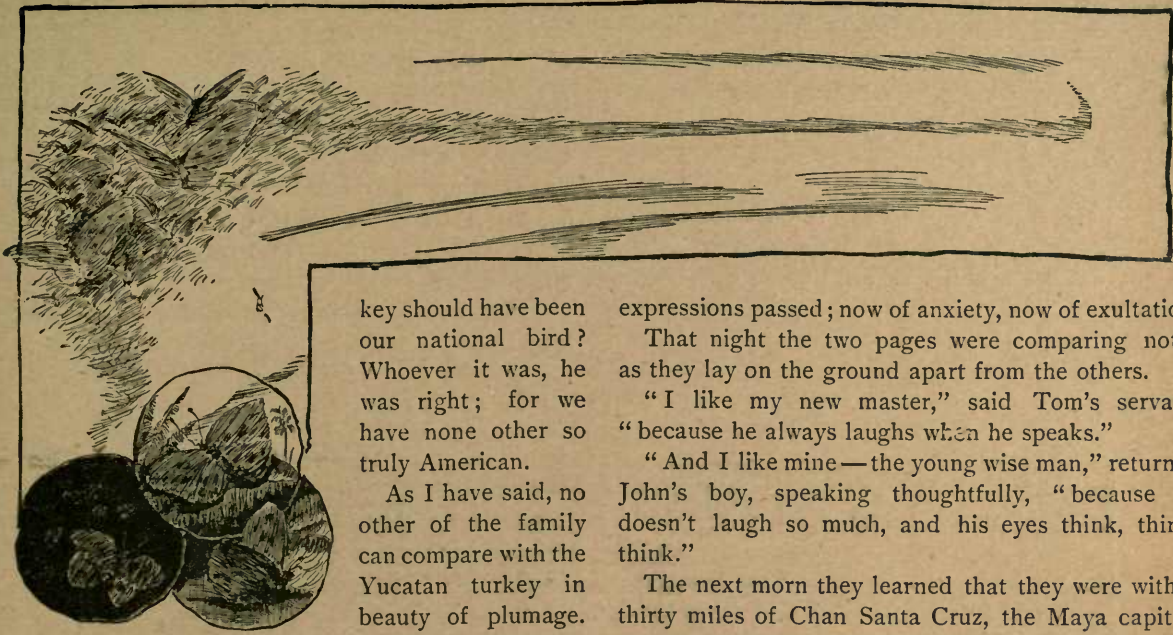
Well, there are three species of wild turkey in



THE TRIBUTE OF INCENSE.

North America. The most beautiful of the three is this one of Yucatan, familiarly known as the Honduras turkey. Ours of the United States, now found in Florida and the Southwest, is a larger bird, and the best known. Ours bears the Latin name of *Meleagris gallopavo*. Then there is another, in Mexico, called *Meleagris Mexicana*, much smaller; this glorious bird of Yucatan is called *Meleagris ocellatus*.

Wasn't it Benjamin Franklin who thought the tur



IN MIGRATION.

name, *ocellatus*, signifies something of its beauty—large eyes, or spots, of blue, which enamel the long tail, surrounded by circles of brilliant yellow and purple. Its wings are like burnished gold and copper, and when the sun shines on its glossy black, it reflects every color of the rainbow.

It was with a sense of exultation that John took this gorgeous creature in hand to prepare him for preservation. It seemed a sin to crumple such beautifully burnished plumage; but he reflected that there were not four in all the museums of the United States, and how rejoiced the Professor would be to secure specimens of so rare a bird; and he experienced a keen feeling of pleasure and triumph. By the time the gorgeous skin was prepared and stuffed with cotton to its natural shape, it was sundown; and his Indian hosts had supper in waiting.

It was plain beyond question that Christobal and all his men now regarded him as a magician; as a necromancer, or medicine man. They could scarcely take their eyes off the stuffed skin which lay there the exact counterfeit of the bird.

Some of them stroked it softly, then hurriedly drew their hands away, as if afraid some spell surrounded it; and then talking together in low tones, congratulated themselves that a wonder-worker had come into their tribe. Over Christobal's grave face strange

key should have been our national bird? Whoever it was, he was right; for we have none other so truly American.

As I have said, no other of the family can compare with the Yucatan turkey in beauty of plumage. It is our American peacock. Its very

expressions passed; now of anxiety, now of exultation.

That night the two pages were comparing notes as they lay on the ground apart from the others.

"I like my new master," said Tom's servant, "because he always laughs when he speaks."

"And I like mine—the young wise man," returned John's boy, speaking thoughtfully, "because he doesn't laugh so much, and his eyes think, think, think."

The next morn they learned that they were within thirty miles of Chan Santa Cruz, the Maya capital, and that probably they might reach it by nightfall.

It was noon before they again stopped. The way had been through dense forest of copal, liquid amber, and cedar. They had now reached the edge of a plain. They halted under the border trees. Tom, from his high perch, had discovered a curious yellow cloud moving slowly over the plain, which stretched away before them till bounded by a line of blue hills. The cloud, now watched by both John and Tom, drew nearer and nearer. It wavered and fluttered, rose and fell with the breeze, and when quite near they saw it was composed of *butterflies*.

A cloud of butterflies in migration to the forest. It was an hour before it had passed. There must have been millions—*billions*. They were sulphur-yellow, with pale spots on their wings. Christobal much enjoying their wonder at the wonders of his country, explained that other clouds would follow, some blue, some green, and some again yellow.

After a light meal the Indians again trudged on. John's guard of honor kept close, anticipating every want, their dark faces breaking into smiles when he spoke. But it was a tedious progress. The hot plain was covered with dry grass; little clumps of trees alone gave shade at intervals.

It was drawing near sunset when they reached outlying fields of cotton, then sugar-cane. Little huts squatted here and there in gardens of tropical plants. These grew more numerous. Presently they entered

a long narrow lane between hedges of wild plants.

Apparently the entire population came down to meet them with shouts of welcome; and at last they halted in a green square before a large thatched house.

They were in the Indian capital, in Chan Santa Cruz.

In many years no one had seen a white man in that whole region. The few people who recollected this event were old and white-headed. They regarded the young strangers with a strange expression. Hardly less strange were the looks they cast upon Christobal, their war chief, but with great solemnity they set apart a house for the captives, and then

been welcomed and reserved for torture, the offenders had been put to death.

The council chamber was crowded. The great cacique sat upon a rude throne hung with tiger skins; those next in civil rank were grouped about him. Christobal's warriors were there, stalwart savages, naked to the waist, who would have fought for their beloved chief to the death; but they, likewise, were under oath to respect the laws. Christobal stood forth to speak:

"Fathers, brothers, ye know me. I am Christobal!"

"You *are* Christobal, the white man's foe!"

"Ye know I would not lightly break the laws—



IT FELL AT THE FEET OF THE CACIQUE.

the tocsin beat for council. Christobal was arraigned. Christobal was their war chief; but he was amenable to the civil authorities. He had transgressed an ancient law of the tribe—he had *captured* two prisoners, when he should have *killed* both. By their sacred tribal laws, the chief forfeited his own life for this transgression. Rarely had such offence been committed, and in those instances, after the captives had

the sacred commands of our ancestors. But who are these prisoners? Are they Spaniards, accursed enslavers of our race?"

"Are they not?" asked the cacique.

"They are not."

"Are they Mestizos, in whose veins flows the corrupted blood of our brother Mayas?"

"No!"

"Fathers, brothers, they are strangers from the North!" uttered Christobal impressively.

The great cacique started, and clutched the sides of his throne.

"They are Americanos!" continued Christobal.

The cacique arose in excitement. "Bring them in!" he cried.

John and Tom were conducted to the council chamber, dimly lighted by smoking torches of *ocote*, or pine wood.

"Luck's changed," whispered Tom; "that old duffer on the throne there's cock of the walk. Shouldn't wonder if our time had come."

The young men were in their Indian garb, and the cacique could not

conceal his admiration as he glanced at John's straight figure and met the fearless glance of his eye.

"They are *not* Spaniards nor Mexicans," he said after a prolonged gaze.

At a signal, the guard of honor escorted them back to their quarters.

"Ye know," continued the war chief, "our traditions; that from the North came Quetzalcoatl, God of the Air, the 'Feathered Serpent' whom our ancestors called Ku-kul-can. To him we owe our sacred religion; he taught us the art of building our temples and palaces; he taught us agriculture and the weaving of hemp and spinning of cotton. When his mission was ended he left us and went back to his abode in the North. Our forefathers beheld him enter his winged *canoe* of serpent skins, and embark with his retinue. All the population of our ancient cities followed him to the coast, entreating him to return; and at the last moment, he promised to send a wise man from the region of the Snow King. We have looked for that messenger many hundred years in vain, have we not? Our sentinels have paced with weary feet the roof-tops of our temples, greeting every morning the rising of the sun as the dawn of that new day in which this herald was to arrive.

"In Tuloom, that deserted city of our fathers, I encountered these white strangers. I knew not whence they came. There were four; two escaped by the *subterraneo*, but that trap prepared so many years ago fell, and allotted us these two. I questioned,

moved by the gods. Lo, they were from the North! Did I not well?"

"Thou hast not done ill, but I see nought superhuman in these strangers, that they are sent hither by Quetzalcoatl."

"Thou hast not seen all. The elder bears with him a wonder engine in which are confined the forces of the elements, thunder and lightning."

"With that same weapon met the Spaniards our ancestors three centuries ago," replied the cacique.

"True; but when once it had spit forth its fire and lead it rested. This is ever filled with *death*; with it he destroys the birds of the air as they cleave the clouds. Yea, though they speed on like the wind."

"We have seen it!" thundered forth the warriors.

"I, too, would see," said the cacique; "order them forth into the square where the birds of night wing the upper darkness. If I behold any miracle, then will I pardon thee."

So saying, the cacique strode into the central square, followed by the warriors and the council.

"Thy life," whispered Christobal as he placed the gun in John's hand, "is the forfeit if thou failest; thy life and mine!"

Darkness was settling fast. A thousand eyes were straining for a glimpse of the mysterious marksman. Myriads of swifts and bats were sporting in the warm heavy air overhead, and now and then a night hawk, or an owl, sailed through the upper atmosphere.

"Point me the bird he would have," said John to Christobal quietly.

A great bird came flapping out of the west, its black form indistinct and weird in the gloom. Softly it sailed along, its broad wings fanning with regular strokes.

The cacique raised his hand, pointing. The bird sailed above as if circling about for prey; higher and higher it rose. "He will miss it," Tom whispered to himself. "He waits too long."

A jet of flame leaped out of the darkness, followed by a roar that disturbed the silence of the heavy tropic night like the explosion of a cannon. Before its echoes had died, a shrill shriek came down from the clouds, but the winged creature still went up higher, higher, till lost to sight.

The cacique looked gravely at Christobal: "Where is thy miracle?"

But presently, with a wild sound from the crowd, a dark mass appeared in the warm darkness, rapidly



OWLS.

descending, and growing larger until it fell straight to the feet of the cacique. Its crooked claws clutched his trailing robe, and at the moment it looked reproachfully up into his face, the death-gurgle sounded in its throat.

A prolonged wailing cry rose from the square.

The cacique stood stupefied. John rested on his gun, waiting with some curiosity the signification of the sudden and universal dismay.

"It is the owl!" whispered Christobal in John's ear. "It is our sacred bird. Now I know not the result. But our Ruler bade thee. I think it bodes him disaster, not thee and me."

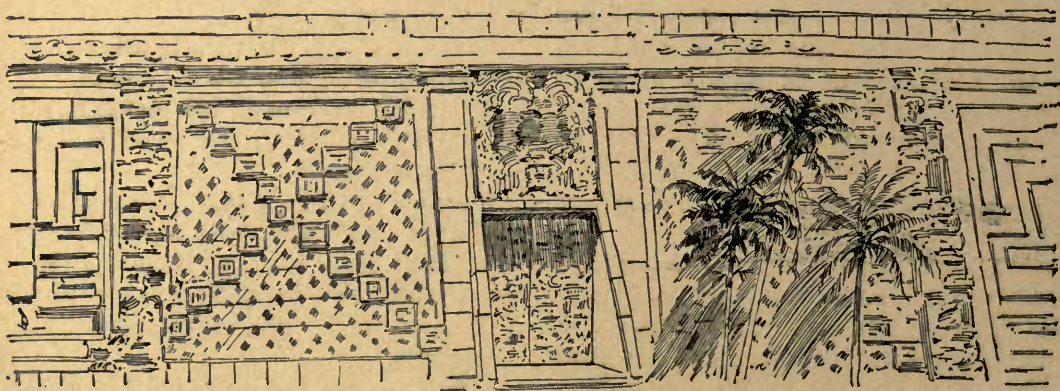
The cacique raised his stern gaze at last. "Away with them to the temples!" he cried angrily. "Hither, Christobal!"

Three hours later, the American boys were led out

they replaced. Their journey now was along the descent of the hills. The vegetation had completely changed. The trees were giants wreathed with masses of vines. The flowering plants were strange and gorgeous; the birds sang wild melodies unknown before to John's ears. Hours later they reached a point where the hills abruptly ended, and they could here and there look out from the wilderness of trees upon open landscape.

"Behold!" said Christobal suddenly, signalling a halt. A valley lay before them about six miles across, everywhere enclosed by hills. Green and cultivated groves of trees dotted it at intervals, and in its centre rose a great stone city with high white walls shining like burnished silver in the morning sun.

Christobal evidently expected surprise and admiration. But John stretched out his hands: his heart



THE GATE OF THE SILVER CITY.

of their dwelling and placed in their *litteras*. A hundred men joined the same warriors who had brought them here, and led the march.

"Where are we going?" asked John of Christobal.

"To the temples—to the city our fathers built, where dwell our priests," he answered, departing at once to the head of the band.

As daylight appeared their eyes were bandaged. "No white man has looked upon this country we are now passing through," said the chief.

All day they journeyed and all the next. The third day they seemed to enter a different region: hills took the place of the flat plain. This they discovered by the uneven motions of the *litteras*.

The third night they camped upon a mountain ridge. It was dark when they stopped. The chief removed their bandages; nor in the morning were

leaped into his throat, his eyes shone with a strange, strong light.

"The SILVER CITY!" he cried, turning to Tom.

"The home of our fathers," slowly pronounced Christobal. "The *Silver City*—*la Crindad de la Plata*! It is your destination."

"Are we to enter there?" asked John earnestly.

"You are to enter," answered Christobal, "never to depart."

"Don't you fret," said Tom, when John had translated this thrilling sentence.

John did not fret. Could he doubt the end of a chain of events that had led straight to the reality of his dreams and plans? He was startled, awed, silenced, but not afraid.

An hour later they had crossed the valley and drawn near the city. The walls were forty feet in

height, sloping inward and crowned by a parapet that curved over in the Egyptian style. They seemed at least two miles square, and were entirely surrounded by a moat or canal a hundred feet wide, crossed by a drawbridge. The fields about were in a high state of cultivation, but not a living thing was seen moving over their expanse. In silence they crossed the drawbridge, and halted at the massive gate. It was composed of two huge blocks of marble, curiously grooved to fit together, and revolving on pivots of stone.

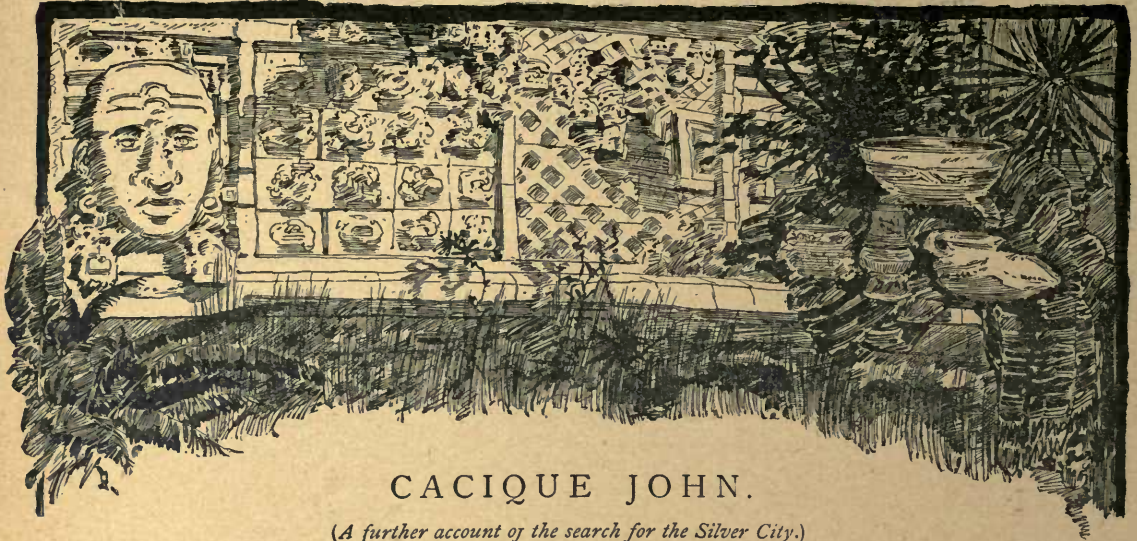
The chief struck with his spiked war club, then called aloud. The gates revolved, opening a passage twenty feet high and ten across. None appeared to greet them.

Over the marble pavement, up between rows of

colossal statuary they marched toward a noble building. It was white like silver, the capitals and entablatures of its portico wrought in frosted silver; bands of gold encircled its fluted columns. Its broad doorway stood open. In one of its vast rooms the Indians deposited the captives' possessions, swung for them two hammocks, and bade them a silent adieu, one by one filing past them, seizing their hands and pressing them to their foreheads. Christobal came last; in his eyes were tears.

A group of ten remained, huddling silently just without — their body-guard, choosing to share this imprisonment.

The boys looked at each other in pale silence. This, then, was the Silver City!



CACIQUE JOHN.

(A further account of the search for the Silver City.)

CHAPTER I.

THE SACRED STRONGHOLD.



HIGH as rose the walls of the Silver City, forty feet or more, they were surrounded by a broad fosse, or moat, nearly one hundred feet wide, crossed by four bridges leading to four great gates.

Each bridge was so built that the portion next the wall could from within be raised by huge cables, like the ancient drawbridge. The walls were two miles square; when accurately measured, they were found to be a little more. Each gate terminated a grand avenue, which cut straight across the vast enclosure intersecting the other avenue running from gate to gate. One ran from north to south, the other from east to west. Both were lined with statues twenty feet high, representing warriors, priests, kings, and *sabios*, or wise men, who had fought, ruled, and flourished in this kingdom, during past unnumbered centuries. Exactly in the centre, where the avenues crossed, sprang a magnificent arch, sixty feet high

from the marble pavement to the keystone. It was triangular, not curved, its inner surface smooth and shining. Crowning this mass of masonry, rising high above the cemented platform of the archway, towered a gigantic statue of Itzamna, the first ruler of the Itzaes—the people who built this city. His noble head diademed by the three symbolic feathers of the Quetzal, looked down upon his brother warriors full seventy feet above them, and out over the beautiful plain to which he, the beneficent deity, made man, had led his people, and where he had taught them the art of agriculture.

The vistas down these broad avenues two miles in length, were grand. Alternating with the statues, rose tall palms, their polished ivory shafts crowned with capitals of golden leaves, and towering to a height equal with the haughty crown of Itzamna.

Four great structures were grouped about the arch, the nucleus of the city; they were alike in architecture, of massive proportions, with pillared corridors, beaded cornices, and battlemented roofs. Around each, between the pillars and the cornices, ran an entablature ten feet in width, one bewildering mass of hieroglyphics.

These were the records of the race, carved in stone, and recording the history of the world from the epoch of universal deluge. Each entablature was

devoted to a different epoch; one was that of fire, the second was that of flood, the third of earthquakes, the fourth of the celestial elements, represented by the sun. The first, second and third were completed: fire, flood, and terrestrial convulsions had swept successively the earth; the periods of their occurrence were recorded here. The fourth great stone book was incomplete; it represented the present epoch, which was to be terminated by the sun, when the celestial spheres were to join together in the final destruction of the world!

Each building, too, had its especial use. One was the palace of the King; another the temple, the shrine of their idols and the home of their priests: the third their academy where their children were taught, space being also set aside as legislative chambers; the last was the Strangers' House, where were lodged and entertained for life, all visitors from other lands. This had been vacant for years; our New England boys were its first occupants in this generation.

These comprised the public edifices of the sacred city. The dwellings of the inhabitants were scattered over the vast spaces enclosed by the great walls. They were built of pure white stone, low, but massive, with bands of blue and red above the beaded cornices; their roofs were flat, with overhanging eaves; there were low doorways, but no doors or windows. The dwellings were grouped in gardens of tropical shrubbery; the coffee, the cacao, sugarcane, banana, bread-fruit and orange. In damp recesses, that aromatic-fruited vine, the vanilla, displayed its pods over running trees already covered with orchids and ferns. Could you have stood upon the platform of the statue of Itzamna, you would



BANANA.

have looked down upon a sea of green, out of which gleamed here and there a white roof, above which the cacao-palms tossed their gold-green branches.

At this instant the city's guests were standing bewildered in a corridor of the Strangers' House. They had seen

no inhabitants. At the first trumpet blast of the sentinel upon the walls, when he descried the procession approaching from the forest, they had retired to their

houses, the elders grave with apprehension, the voices of the children hushed, for a report had spread that they were *teules*—these visitors—men of the air who could work them harm.

Now a prolonged blast resounded from the great trumpet hung in the temple. While its echoes flew from wall to wall, the marble streets became alive with women and children who formed in procession at the western gate, then marched to the central temple, where they halted, while the priests, six in number, came forth to their head; all were bareheaded, and simply clad in pale-blue tunics, gathered at the waist by a crimson cord with golden tassels.



COFFEE BRANCH.

Their bare ankles were wound about by braided thongs confining curious sandals of soft deerskin. Every face was bright and open; their skins were golden brown, their cheeks like russet apples kissed by the October sun; their eyes black, large, and silken-fringed. They were noticeably short in stature, their hands and feet remarkably small.

Three musicians crouched on the upper step of the broad staircase. One solemnly pounded a drum, made of a hollow log; another blew a flute fashioned of a papyrus reed from the moat; the other clashed two turtle shells—all in unison.

The procession now moved on to the Strangers' House, and ascended the marble steps. By direction of their pages, John and Tom came out to meet them, pausing in the corridor, their body-guard in a semicircle behind them, their Indian pages on either side.

The priests approached, grave and serious men, clad in long white robes. All the Indians fell upon their knees with hands extended. Our New England boys remained motionless, as grave as they, while the priests walked around them four times, swinging censers, half-smothering them in incense fumes. These censers they tossed finally to the four points of the compass, bowing twice to the east, whence comes the sun, their great deity.

Then the procession moved on, the guard of honor surrounded the white strangers and led the way, with the banner of the sun waving in front.

This time it was to the temple! They entered through its gloomy portal the western section, vast,

high, and dark. No windows lighted it. At its farther end a spark of fire gleamed out of the darkness. It was their emblem of life, the *perpetual fire*, which is never allowed to go out, burning upon the sacred altar. On either side rose a square pedestal of marble. Before these the company halted, dividing to right and left. Here the strangers were separated, and gently led to the pedestals. Placed, living statues, upon the gleaming heights, the people fell back, the priests retreated, bowing themselves upon the floor; then rising, they waved their censers till altar, pedestals and statues were enveloped in dense clouds of fragrant smoke.



THE COCO-TREE.

When it cleared, our heroes found themselves alone. For a few minutes they remained standing, more like statues than ever upon their marble bases. They were dazed by the strange spectacle. At last Tom spoke: "I say, John, isn't this rather solemn? Let's git down."

"Wait, Tom, let me think! Every move now must be well taken. This is their Temple of the Sun. If what I have read is true, they pay their devotions to him three times each day—as he is rising, as he is overhead at noon, and as he sets in the west. They should find us here, as they left us, when they enter again."

"Well," said Tom, "as it's now about noon, 'cordin' to your lay-out, we've got at least six hours of standin' to do—be blest if I like being interwove to be part and parcel of a religious ceremony! Say, John, they've done jest what I told you they'd do; they've gone and made *idols* of us! Strikes me it's tolerable tedious work, bein' a idol."

"Rather saw wood," said John with a grim smile. "Still, I think we should fall in with their expectations as far as we can guess at their ideas."

"Well, this 'll be something to tell the folks—that is, if we ever get out. Talk about your Arabian Nights—they're nowhere. We've gone through more'n Sinbad the Sailor, and that fellow with his wonderful lamp, ever thought of! What d'you 'spose the mate and Don Pedro's doing now? Wouldn't they laugh to see us standin' here doin' duty as idols? I say, John, I'm going to see what's behind that curtain back of the altar."

Still he paused, half-awed, while they both glanced about the vast, solemn structure. Impressive cathedral effects were obtained by the high triangular arches of the ceiling, the arches at the ends built up at right angles to the longitudinal one, forming a deep recess separated from the nave by heavy sable-black curtains.

"I'm going to see what's behind that curtain," repeated Tom.

"I'm not sure that I would, Tom," began John; "I believe sharp eyes are on us." But Tom had leaped down, and was already pushing aside the mysterious folds. The gloom was so deep that at first he saw nothing, but a minute later he stumbled backward with a smothered cry. With uncertain steps, he returned to his pedestal. He stood silent, burying his face in his hands.

"What was it, Tom?"

Tom shook his head. "It was too horrible!"

In silence the dark afternoon wore away. Tom, tired of standing, and less anxious than John, sat down on his pedestal. Long before sunset, he was sound asleep. By his watch, John knew the time when the priests would probably return. As the time drew near, a great misgiving seized him. But with the first sound of steps, he nerved himself. He called to Tom, but Tom did not hear. He ran to him, shook him, at last roused him. Tom pulled himself together hastily, and both hastily returned to their positions of state. Tom was yawning, and was vaguely feeling for his pockets when the priests entered the temple.

"There's one thing I don't like about these Indian leggins," he muttered to John, "they ain't got no pockets in 'em!"

The priests bowed low before them, and then, at a signal, pages and body-guard entered, and conducted them forth, and along beneath the avenue of palms, as they came, to the Strangers' House. The golden beams of the setting sun were lighting the under surfaces of the palm leaves, while the city below lay in shade; and they already felt the coolness of twilight. Their guides led them through the eastern room into a large court, or *patio*, about one hundred and sixty feet square. A corridor ran around this court, overhung by a slanting roof. Marble steps descended to a plantation of tropical trees and flowering vines. In the centre of this fragrant garden was built a great marble basin, into which bubbled up waters soft and clear, from a subterranean source.

The agile pages divested their young masters of their clothing, and led them to the fountain. They were soon floating in the pearl-blue water. All the stiffness of limb, from the pedestal ordeal, and from the fatigue of travel, vanished. The water was warm, and evidently mineral, and was as invigorating as soothing.

Looking upon the exquisite sculptures that adorned the marble bath, the vines that hung over the marble steps and scented the air with drowsy odors, and up through the strangely foliated plants that hid the sky from their sight, the boys might well have fancied themselves at the entrance of some Oriental paradise.

Their attendants dried them with handfuls of soft *pita* fiber, and then rubbed over them a transparent ointment, compounded from fragrant herbs, then wrapped them in curiously dyed robes of cotton, corded about the waist, bound soft sandals upon their feet, and led them to their hammocks. The combined influences of the bath, and the bland atmosphere, rendered them drowsy, but their Indians awoke them. They brought them delicate coco cups of foaming chocolate, and thin crisp *tortillas* yet warm from the fire. Then they brought water to lave their fingers, and, having dried them, kissed their hands, and signified that now they could rest.

For many days our New England boys lived a life of luxuriose ease — fêted guests. Every morning their pages brought them coco nuts of sweet water; then they bathed in the soft fountain, and drank tiny cups of chocolate and ate dainty *tortillas* while swinging in their hammocks.

Just before noon a breakfast was always brought them of roast or stewed chicken, bread-fruit, sweet potatoes, *frijoles*, or beans (one of the ancient dishes of the country), and parched corn cakes. An hour before sunset, a lighter repast was spread upon the stone, altar-like table, mostly of fruits; delicious oranges, custard-apples and anonas.

In these days of quiet they "took account of stock," as Tom expressed it; overhauled and put in order everything the Indians had saved from the boat, cleaned their fire-arms, and carefully prepared their ammunition.

The vast room opening on the court, nearly one hundred and eighty feet long, seemed so dreary and unhomelike that John induced his captors to divide it by gay-colored curtains. Then they hung similar bright blankets — *serapes* — against the white walls, and piled in the corners heaps of cotton stuffs, bright,

and lustrous as silk: the singular Oriental effect can hardly be imagined.

Of pictures they had none; but of their books they had that precious record of the "Conquest," a few old magazines, a folded map of Yucatan, and an almanac for that year: these they treasured.

They wondered at first why they saw so few men among the people; but it was explained that they were absent on a hunt in the mountains. They usually stayed away several weeks at a time.

Wherever they chose they wandered among the neat and attractive dwellings, through the highly cultivated gardens, and even ascended to the base of the great statue of Itzamna, by means of the pyramidal steps at the corners of the monument. Everywhere they met with the same reverent respect as greeted their arrival. Women smiled upon them from their doorways, where they sat weaving cotton



THE ORDEAL IN THE TEMPLE.

on their primitive looms, the men seized their hands and pressed them against their foreheads, and the little children kissed them as they hung at their sides — the children, chubby, laughing little elves, brown and shining, they evidently did not believe the two smiling white strangers were *teules* who would carry them away to their abodes in the air: not they! they followed them as regularly as their body-guard. Yet

they never entered their house — that was a place set apart for strangers.

"Never saw such polite children in my life," said Tom.

"They come honestly by it," said John, "for the ancient Itzaes were the most refined people on earth. They inherit the graces from their ancestors."



INDIAN CENSERS.

"I've been thinkin', John, how 'twas these Itzaes got all kinds of fruits and flowers gathered here, when half of 'em don't belong to Yucatan, do they?"

"No, Tom. And I have noticed it too. These people do have nearly every kind of fruit the tropics produce. Let's see, now, what they've here in their gardens that came originally from other countries."

They were strolling along the southern avenue, and now they turned into the nearest garden. There were no dividing walls; all the people worked and owned property in common.

"Now these great palms over our heads," continued John, "do not belong to Yucatan. They may, perhaps, be found wild in the forests of Southern Mexico, but they are natives of the West Indies and South America. See, they are over eighty feet tall! Yet I have read of some species growing in the Antilles to a height of one hundred and fifty. I don't know whether these are the Royal Palm of Cuba, or the Cabbage Palm of the Southern islands. The Royal Palm, the *Palma Real* of the Cubans, is said to be the most magnificent of the family. There's an avenue of these Cabbage Palms — *Oreodoxa oleracea* — in Rio Janeiro, celebrated all the world over: but what would botanists say if they could see this glorious colonade of great shafts, over two miles long? This coco palm must have come to Yucatan all the way from the East Indies; from the island of Ceylon. Nobody knows when the first nut was drifted upon these shores, but there are millions of trees growing in Central America to-day."

"Look at this queer tree, John," interrupted Tom. "The trunk's covered all over with great pods, ezactly like *rats* without tails."

"That! let me think; oh! that's *cacao*, what they

make our chocolate of and cocoa. Break open one of those pods — see this pulp, and these brown seeds in the pulps! They make chocolate from them. Now this tree belongs to the country. Don't you remember reading in my old book about the first visit of the Spaniards to Montezuma, and how the author says the Emperor's servants brought in foaming chocolate in little gold cups?"

They were now in a grove of cacao trees, mingled with others not so large, brilliant with dark glossy leaves and clusters of scarlet berries clinging to every branch and twig. Our book botanist was puzzled at first, but after having burst open one of the berries, which was about the size of a cranberry, and finding two joined seeds, or beans, inside, he recalled a description he had read of the coffee plant.

"Look here, Tom! here are *hundreds of pounds of coffee* just going to waste! The ground is covered with it. I don't believe the people dream of the civilized use of the berry."

"Hurrah! Let's boil some to-morrow, and treat 'em to a new breakfast-cup right out of their own garden."

"Not so fast, Tom," laughed John. "Our coffee has to be hulled and dried first. We'll bring out our haversack to-morrow, and fill it. It will be fun, though, to present them a new sensation in the shape of a delicious cup of coffee."

Tom was silent for a moment. "John, old fellow," said he, "if there was only a market handy, we'd make our fortune out of this find. Where did coffee come from, John, do you know?"

"From the East—from Arabia; but it's at home anywhere in a hot, moist region. It grows best in the mountainous regions of the tropics."

"How come you to know all this?" asked Tom.

"Oh! I read up, knowing I was coming to a tropic country. I wanted to be able to recognize things when I saw them."

"But I guess here's something that 'll bother you. What's this vine climbing up this old tree here? My, how nice the flowers smell!"

"The vanilla," answered John readily; "more valuable on the coast than the coffee. Its pods have been at one time worth their weight in gold."

They had come to the border of the grove now, and before them lay a garden-like expanse of cane.

"Corn!" said Tom. "No; what is it?"

"Must be sugar-cane. Yes, it is! I wonder how they grind the cane to express the juice? I hear somebody pounding; let's see what they're at!"

Having reached a small house on the border of the canes, in another bower of trees, they found a woman beating some stalks of sugar-cane between two stones. She had cut it up in small pieces, but got very little juice with all her bruising and battering. She invited the boys into the house, and offered them a calabash of cane juice, sweet and refreshing.

John turned to his comrade: "See here! I don't know about the coffee speculation, but one thing I do know, you and I'll make these people a cane-mill within two weeks."

hunting and battle arms. So the patient workers hewed and trimmed with their great forest knives.

Near the plantation they had visited, they erected a strong frame-work and set up the rude rollers side by side, and by means of a strong beam, the rollers were at last made to revolve; in fact, they really achieved a rude but effective sugar-mill.

Meantime the whole city was in a state of great agitation. Men, women and children visited the works every day, gazing upon the machinery with awe: many evidently regarded the machinery as a malicious



IN THE COURT OF THE STRANGERS' HOUSE.

"All right; I'm jest spilin' for something to do. They'll think we're gods for sure, then."

They went back to their quarters that afternoon, with a jolly interest in life. The next day the simple Indians were astonished to see them labor with their hands. From a great log, the Indians by their directions, cut two round rollers two feet in diameter, and then they peeled off their bark, and left tenons at either end of both. There was not a saw in the whole city, and few implements of iron besides their

outcome of the *teules'* power—probably intended to mysteriously hurl the city and its inhabitants forth into space. Still all orders were obeyed. The day came at last to put the new mill to the test. The entire population seemed to have gathered, some laughing, chatting, jesting, but never quarreling, some pale with anxiety.

Now, obeying John's orders, the body-guard cut a heap of cane stalks, and deposited them by the mill. By John's directions, they now laid hold of the beam,

and the rollers revolved. A cane stalk was placed between. The people gazed in new wonder. The mill creaked and groaned. The golden juice dropped down into the trough they had hollowed; more cane was placed, and the amber drops increased to a little rill that flowed into the calabash under the spout.

The people understood now. Some rushed to the power-beam, others ran to the garden and cut cane, others waited to bring and remove calabashes at the trough.

The whole design was comprehended. Joyous farewell to weary hours of slow hand labor! The universal expression seemed to be that the wonderful young *teules* should be lifted to willing shoulders, and be carried in triumphal procession: but none dared lay hands upon them. At last by common consent, a platform was hastily constructed, fine brilliant blankets thrown over it, and the structure placed

wove garlands which they timidly offered, and all joined in a rude chant of rejoicing.

John never forgot this hour in which they made a joyous people even more joyous.

The thanksgiving over the event was universal, with one exception—a grumbling old Indian, who lived alone in a corner of the city walls. He had shaken his surly head over the new machine from the beginning, evidently regarding it as an abode



THE SUGAR CANE.

erected for the Father of Evil. He could not refrain from shaking it and kicking it, to Tom's amusement.

One day Tom came in bursting with laughter. "John," cried he, "you know that old feller that's been poohing the mill, and trying to shake it down?"

"Yes; what of him?"

"Well—oh, I can't hardly breathe, I've laughed so much! Why, he went a-poohing round it this afternoon, while some of the Indians was grindin' cane, and his robe, or whatever you call it these men wear, got caught between the rollers. And you know the simple things don't know how to turn the mill *only one way*, and they kept turning instead of untwisting, and the surly old dog set up a howl and begun a dance, I tell you! And then his long hair got caught, and in another minute there'd have been trouble, if I hadn't been there, for they kept right on turning, and drawing him in more and more. I sung out, 'Back her! back her!' and jumped for the beam and turned the rollers back and let him loose. You won't believe it—but them Indians seemed to take a grim delight in the whole thing. They said, near's I could make out, that it was the will of the Great Spirit that he should be punished for his unbelief. He won't bother the mill any more, I judge."

One thing, however, puzzled our beneficent young *teules*. Why had not the cacique sent for them? He was in the city. He had been told of the wonder-working machines and the guns that were ever charged with thunder, but no summons came from the palace.

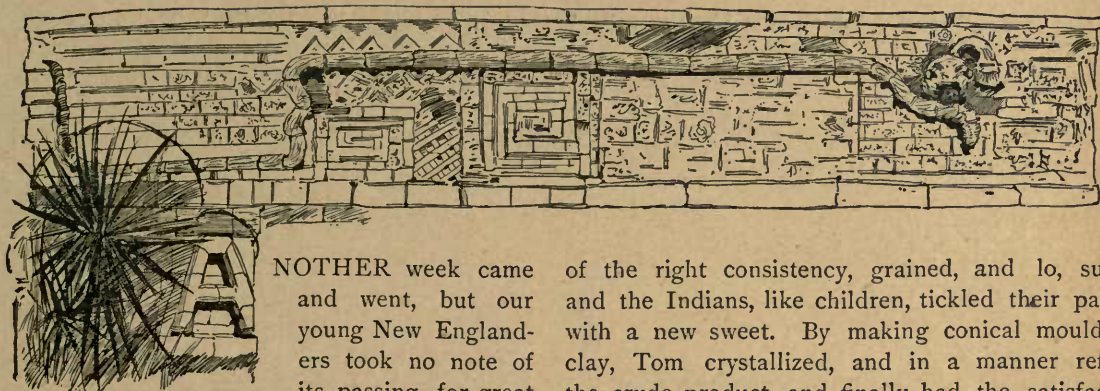
"Wait 'till my warriors return," said he to his priestly counsellors. "If we give this *teule* permission to display his weapons, he may destroy us all—even though he seem a beneficent *teule*."



THE UNBELIEVER.

upon poles. By signs, they entreated the boys to take their places on this gay *litera*. Then, bearing it aloft, the joyous throng moved down the royal avenue. The children, with true festal impulse, gathered flowers and scattered before, the maidens

CHAPTER II.



ANOTHER week came and went, but our young New Englanders took no note of its passing, for great plans occupied all their waking hours. John, a born adventurer, as you know, had tired of the romantic solitude. Surrounded by people with whom he could not converse, Tom had tired of inaction. The former had set himself diligently to learn the Itza language; the latter had appointed himself master-mechanic-in-general to this kingdom in the forest.

The language was simple; a primitive tongue, composed largely of monosyllables, open, liquid and musical. John made the acquaintance of the most intelligent women of the city. He knew that woman in every race, and in every age, was the conservator of language in its purity. He made rapid progress, and soon could converse sufficiently to further Tom's improvements and inventions. Together they resolved to teach the people how to make sugar from the perishable cane juice. It was a difficult undertaking, for neither had ever witnessed the operation, and John alone knew the theory from books. The Indians could make pottery, inheriting art from their remotest ancestors. At the suggestion of their stranger guests, they now fashioned some very large jars, holding twenty gallons each. These, as bidden, they filled with cane juice at the mill. Jar after jar was experimented with day after day. At last, the syrup in the great clay furnaces which Tom had constructed, became

of the right consistency, grained, and lo, sugar! and the Indians, like children, tickled their palates with a new sweet. By making conical moulds of clay, Tom crystallized, and in a manner refined the crude product, and finally had the satisfaction of turning out before John and the crowd of Indians, a cone of amber sugar.

The Indians bore it to the temple and exhibited it to their priests, who in turn displayed it before the idols; and later it was presented to the cacique, with the compliments of the beneficent young wonder-workers.

"See," said the high priest, "what our new gods have created from the cane! It is because they came from the North—from the region of the Snow King. They have *frozen its blood*; taste!" The cacique both tasted and handled. He was beside himself with pleasure and surprise.

"Is it possible," said he, "that this cream of delights came from the jointed cane of our fields? Have we so long existed without knowing what the cane contained? It seems that our ancestors were fools—that we are fools."

And the priests, warm allies of their guests, made answer boldly: "As compared with these strangers, O mighty master, we *are* fools!"

"Bring them to me," cried the cacique suddenly. "I will await the coming of my warriors no longer. I see they intend us no harm. Bring them at once."

At once meant without ceremony. The cacique received them in the palace court. They found him walking in the inner corridor, a long, glittering vista of gold-fluted pillars hung with cages of bright-

plumed singing-birds; the carvings upon the walls were grotesque and very fanciful in design; the steps that descended to the garden fountain were covered with plates of hammered silver; the throne, which they could see in the eastern room, gleamed as if covered with beaten gold.

To delicately show that he considered the young strangers his equals, the cacique had put off his robe of state and was clad simply in white, with only a circlet of hammered gold crowning his brows and confining his long black hair. He seemed about fifty years of age, tall, and finely-shaped. His keen eyes rested upon his young guests piercingly for a space, and then taking a hand of each, he led them to seats.

"Which is he of the sacred thunder?" demanded he of the priests. "And which the freezer of cane-juice? I would see them work these wonders with my own eyes."

The priests protested. His Majesty should not expose himself to possible peril. They cited the case of the man caught in the cane mill, and of the cacique of the Sublevados, by whose temerity the bird of night was killed and the ill will thus obtained of the demons of darkness!

"I care not," returned he; "they were evil men, who doubted the powers of these our guests. I do not doubt."

First he was taken to the mill and the sugar works. There he saw the workmen preparing sugar for his own royal table. The laborers greeted him reverently, for it was rarely the cacique went abroad among his people, and they were surprised. Next the American guns and pistols were exhibited, but the cacique would not take them in his hands. He, however, insisted upon witnessing a discharge. John hesitated. He did not wish to alarm the inhabitants, nor did he care to make his experiments common.

"Do a big thing," said Tom. "Try the rifle."

The rifle was a breech-loader, with a magazine containing sixteen shots. But John concluded to fire it but twice at most, because ammunition was precious, and in order to reserve a new surprise for the Indians, should there come the time of need.

"What does the cacique desire me to shoot?" he asked. The monarch glanced up and down the royal avenue. He saw a vulture sailing high in the air. Now by the laws of their religion these Itzaes were prohibited from killing any living thing

except for food. The children and women never knowingly killed even a worm or an insect. Their hands were free from blood: the reason why they alone, and the priests, performed all the ceremonies of their worship. No person who had destroyed the life of a created being might pray direct to the gods. Even the fowls used for food were killed by old men who had been warriors in their younger days; only then might the women cook them. But there was an exception in favor of killing birds of prey or animals that destroyed others of their race. The king-vulture was such a bird—vile, unclean, and held in special abhorrence by the cleanly Itzaes.

The cacique pointed out this creature to the strangers. The time was noon, when these birds, having digested their breakfast, leave the walls and roofs where, gorged, they sit all the morning, and fly forth, sailing round and round, higher and higher, circling nearer and nearer towards the sun, until mere specks in the clouds. It was now, as I said, the heat of midday, and these birds were abroad on their aerial evolutions. They were at least three hundred yards up, six or eight of them, the king-vulture in the centre, the others sporting around him.

"I guess you're posed this time, John," said Tom. "There isn't one man in a hundred could hit that bird that distance. And yet, since you're a god, you're expected to do it."

But John coolly lifted the rifle, in his soul thankful for all his practice in the green old New England forests. The cacique watched him narrowly as he sighted, resting the gun over Tom's shoulder and falling upon one knee. The report broke the noon-day quiet of the city with a loud shock. All the people rushed out of their houses, roused from their hammock siestas. It so astonished the cacique that he forgot what he had requested, until a crackling of the palm branches over his head reminded him of the vulture, which at that moment fell through the palms and descended to the pavement with a thud. There it lay, its shiny feathers dabbled in blood. Like the chief of the



VULTURE.

Mayas, the cacique was utterly bewildered. But a descendant of a long line of royal rulers, he quickly veiled his awe and tremor. His keen perception, his ready wit, saw in these wielders of weapons so deadly most powerful allies against his enemies, the Lacandones, the fierce Indians of the mountains, who were continually descending upon his city in deadly raid.

But he did not give voice to this thought; and while he admired in silence, John, at Tom's whispered suggestion, fired once more, this time at a shining bunch of cocoanuts two hundred yards away. The central



JOHN TEACHING THE PRINCESS XIA.

cocoonut fell pierced through, and another was neatly cut from the stem. A loud howl greeted their fall, and, to John's surprise, the Indians who had run to pick them up came back grave and apprehensive. By a strange chance the nut had fallen upon the surly old Indian who had kicked their cane mill. He was lying under the tree, out of sight in the dense foliage, and the great nut had nearly knocked him breathless. This was told the cacique. He answered solemnly: "These Teules are great; they do not forget their enemies, nor may their enemies hope to hide from them. We must be careful not to

offend. Where are my children? Send them to me."

Two beautiful children soon emerged from an inner apartment, followed by their attendants. One of the pair was a straight young stripling about fourteen years old, Prince Zan (pronounced Tsan). He looked fearlessly into the eyes of the Teules, as he came up, the manliest young boy John had ever seen. His sister Xia (pronounced Heah) was two years younger, though fully as mature as her brother.

Never, as the young men later confessed to one another, had they looked upon more perfect examples of perfect physique. The little girl was fairer in complexion than her Indian relatives; she had a creamy hued skin soft as velvet, and cheeks flushed with rose. Her eyes were deep, lustrous black, looking from between long silken lashes; her hair was cut square across her forehead and fell behind to her waist, purple-black with that glossy hue, that rich deep purple that gives the lustre to the raven's wing; her little mouth held the whitest of teeth, and her sweet lips were parted in her wondering gaze. Her feet and hands were very small, as were those of her brother, and her arms bare to the shoulder, were beautifully moulded. She wore the traditional iupil, or costume of her Itza ancestors, the pure white garment, that fell from the shoulders and required no fastening; a silver cord with golden tassels confined it about her slender waist, while her little feet were encased in deerskin buskins braided with silver. Her brother wore a similar costume except that his sash was broader and had suspended from it many charms and amulets. About the necks of each was hung a golden chain with a star of the same precious metal flashing upon their breasts, signifying that they were descendants of Itzamna, son of the celestial powers.

The cacique took the hands of the little prince and princess, and, leading them forward, addressed the magic-working strangers, speaking in the soft liquid Itza:

"Sons of the air, ye have come among us from the dwelling place of Kukulcan, we believe, because ye have brought us knowledge of things we knew not of before, and because we see you working for our good. Ye must have seen that all we have lies at your feet: our lives, our possessions. Now I make a last gift. I confide to you my son and my daughter, that you may instruct them, so that they may hereafter rule this kingdom with wisdom and power unknown to our forefathers."

This speech was full of words which John had not yet mastered; but as the little hand of the princess was laid within his, he understood that a great trust was being reposed in him; and in the following days, as the little princess crouched at his feet, lisping the soft syllables of the Itza language, while the prince and Tom devoted their time to the mysteries of mechanics, he grew to feel a graver responsibility than ever before had rested upon him.

Every morning the noble maidens of the palace brought the children to the Strangers' House, and remained to conduct them away.

Little Xia was an apt scholar and kept pace with John in the mutual endeavor to acquire a new tongue. **Hers** was an unwritten language; no books were available—indeed, with both the progress was at first wholly by object teaching. But Xia rapidly learned the letters of the English alphabet, and could soon construct words. Ideas, of course, were difficult to communicate; but let us anticipate events a little and come to the day when she first received a written letter.

The mysteries of writing had never been revealed to any of her race. Wonderingly she had watched the process. A great longing evidently took possession of her. If she could only astonish her brother by reading a written note! Would they not then rank her with the Teules? Would they not wonder? So while Tom and Prince Zan wandered in the groves, taking object lessons from nature, the princess sat with her maidens and her instructor in the great cool corridor and pored over the secrets of the copy book. Finally she could read a simple sentence in script. Then patiently and slowly she formed one herself, and then one afternoon she took with her to the palace John's precious book. The next morning by an understanding with John, she did not accompany her brother to the Strangers' House. Then John wrote a note and sent it to her by Zan. He took the paper to his sister. She gravely opened it and read aloud: "Please send me my book." Then she gave Zan the book, explaining that John had sent for it, as he could see. Of course he could see no such thing, and of course, also, little Xia could hardly contain the joy she felt at his look of wild surprise.

He ran with the mysterious, the magic paper, to his father, crying aloud: "See, oh, my father, what the Teule has taught my sister! He has made this paper to speak to her."

The cacique was amazed. He could not conceal

his great delight. He took the little princess in his arms.

"Then thou has learnt the art of the strangers, and canst make inanimate things speak for thee! My little one, great things the future hath in store for thee, and for thy country through thee, thou daughter of a king."

It soon became noised among the people: "Our princess hath learnt the language of the invisible ones, of the beings who dwell in space;" and they sorrowed, fearing she should be snatched away from them to their abodes in the clouds.

Perceiving what the children of the cacique were to the people, John often felt himself oppressed for fear he should fail in guiding them to their highest good. The expanding of Xia's simple nature was like the opening of a wild rose in a forest lane, or like an orange blossom in a wood of Southern pines. Her young instructor felt that through her he was influencing the whole Itza race of the future; nay, the destiny of the kingdom itself. He shrank, sometimes, from the idea of ever putting into her hands books which should reveal to her the existence of civilized peoples, their customs, their ideas, and their history—and no wonder! Stimulated by Xia's wonderful achievement, Prince Zan wandered less with Tom in the gardens, and devoted the heat of the day to study. There was, indeed, a general awakening, for Tom seemed to keenly recognize his own educational short-comings, and he, too, became one of John's pupils.

If there was one thing that astonished the Itzaes more than the guns, it was John's watch. A time-piece they had never seen before. At Tom's roguish suggestion, he first showed it to the cacique and the priests. They said at once, "It is the visible presence of our father the Sun," but could form no idea of its workings.

It is on record on imperishable stone, that the ancient people of Yucatan understood astronomy; that they could calculate eclipses and the yearly journeys of the sun. They were, beyond question, a wise and civilized people: but war and pestilence had swept the wise men away and left among their descendants not even a tradition of the extent of their learning.

After some reflection John proposed to erect a



A NEW WONDER.

sun-dial in the centre of the city—a perpetual time-piece for the inhabitants, and a memorial of the friendship felt for them by the two strangers from the North. The proposal when comprehended was received with shouts of joy. Masons were sent for. Soon a table of stone was erected on a spot where the sun always shone; and as rarely is there a cloudy day in Yucatan, the public time-record would always do its duty.

A square block of smooth limestone was set in mason-work, with its face horizontal to the horizon, and in its centre was inserted a gnomon, or pin, the shadow of which falling across the stone would indicate the hour. Several days were spent in testing the declination of the shadows, until at last John had marked out a perfect dial, and a learned Indian who carved hieroglyphics, cut the stone carefully. The next work was to initiate the chief priest into the secret of the hours, and when a chosen number could tell the time by the shadow across the dial, a great feast followed and a new epoch of the national life dated from the festal day.

The priests longed to hang John's watch about the neck of their chief idol, but John explained that the Great Being whom they supposed had sent the watch to earth, would be much offended were they to offer it thus to a senseless figure of stone. In this way he hoped he had taken a step toward inducing them to abandon their idols and worship only the true God.

He reserved the watch for important ends. The cacique, he knew, was burning with a desire to own it, and he resolved he should have it; but, Yankee-like, wished to make it the means of doing as much good as possible. He told the prince and princess that the first one who should learn to read the time of day at sight, and to correctly care for the watch, should have the privilege of presenting it to the cacique!

He could not have appealed to a stronger motive. Both studied earnestly. It seemed that the prince made the most progress, but one afternoon Xia drew John aside and asked him to question her about the hours. He found her answers perfect. He was about to call out to Tom that Xia had won the prize, when she placed her little hand over his lips. Then she drew his head down and whispered in his ear, "Let Zan give it; then both of us will have had a pleasure."

But before the famous watch was finally presented to the king, to be hung up over the throne, it was

publicly exhibited to the people. Each man, woman and child was allowed to come forward in turn and look at it, to hear it tick, and to gaze upon its mysterious wheels and levers. You have seen the effect the ticking of a watch will produce on a child. Then imagine what it was upon these innocent people, who, with all a child's simplicity, had yet the reasoning faculty which attributed the small voice within the case to the powers of the air.

It seemed impossible that the "Teules" could gain to any greater extent the love and reverence of the inhabitants of the city; but they resolved not to lose what they possessed. They had not sought to be believed the owners of supernatural powers; neither had they chosen as yet to dispossess them of the harmless belief. John's greatest object, though he had indeed discovered the Silver City of his wizard book, still remained unaccomplished—the finding of his father; he needed every advantage in the search which he contemplated as soon as he could speak the Itza language fluently. Therefore he and Tom still accepted the homage of the people, still occasionally exhibited themselves, their accomplishments and their weapons, and left the beholders to draw their own conclusions.

Sometimes, naturally, they viewed the matter in a ludicrous light. "I declare!" Tom had repeated many times, "if it wasn't for the fact that these people are *deceiving themselves*, and we are not trying to be more than we are, I should be ashamed of this business. Here these innocents imagine we're just little gods! 'sposen they only knew what mighty small pertaters we were to home! They'd run us out of the city before night."

"I think," replied John, "that we are not doing wrong; we do not boast, we do not say what we can do, or may do. If the time ever comes when they see that we are indeed but very common mortals, I hope they will still love us for our own sakes."

"John, you're right, as usual. But I do hope the time will never come when any other white folks will ever enter this city. Just imagine these simple folks at the mercy of a lot of traders and brutal Spaniards or Mexicans! or even sharp Yankees! But John, I think *we're* better boys for coming into this city, and we haven't harmed them. That little prince has just crept into my heart. If we should go away I believe he would cry his eyes out. And as for that little Xia, if ever there was a little angel she's one. Wouldn't she hate to have us go, though!"

"I think she would, Tom. And I really think it would be a struggle for us to get away. They might even hold us captives for life out of pure affection for us! I have no doubt I can contrive ways to get out of the city, when the time comes, but I am in no hurry. It's very certain that our duty lies here for some months to come. But I wish, Tom, it wouldn't be so much of a shock to them for me to shoot some of the wonderful birds that are here in myriads. What excuse can I give the cacique? For any reasonable excuse I'm sure he would grant me permission; but these people are so gentle and so religious that the killing of any animal seems to give them actual pain."

"Why, just tell 'em the ones who sent us here want specimens of all they've got in the city. They'll naturally infer they're wanted for the great Ice King, and be only too glad to let you get all you want."

John laughed, and presently laid his wish before the cacique, who gladly gave the order to assist the boys in collecting specimens of every animal in the kingdom; and they were rejoiced to do so, feeling flattered that the great Kukulcan should take such an interest in the productions of their little empire. The collection daily grew, for even the children brought them beetles and butterflies and sometimes birds which they had caught in their hands. Every time the gun was fired, however, these sensitive people felt a great shock, and John recognizing that here was a race naturally more refined than his own, often wondered to what heights of real civilization they might not be raised.

But little Prince Zan came to his relief one day in securing the birds without noise, by asking if he could not use the *sabrecan*. This was a straight hollow reed bound about with silver and gold, which the boy



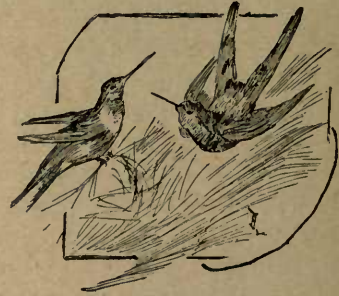
ORIOLE.

had taken from his father's royal armory—a blowgun, in fact, such as the South American Indians have used for remote ages, and through which clay pellets can be blown with deadly force.

A favorite recreation was a visit to the market, held in a square behind the academy. A thousand Indian women were

usually gathered there, buying, selling, trading, all noiselessly grouped about on the clean stone pavement, each with the products of her garden or loom.

The most curious thing was, that they had no money whatever; at least, no money of metal. When things were not evenly exchanged, they used the seeds of the cacao as "change." This primitive currency has been in use



HUMMING BIRDS.

amongst them for many hundred years. It was the only kind known when Yucatan was discovered, in 1506. One advantage was, that when you had accumulated a large stock you could convert it into a refreshing drink. They often smiled as the sight grew more frequent of here and there a heap of coffee berries in front of some enterprising vender. The new beverage which the strangers had prepared from the coffee berry had greatly won the cacique. He could hardly believe that anything so delicious could be drawn from the red berries that lay thick and neglected in his domain; it was even more wonderful than the sugar wonder. "There is indeed no limit to thy power," said he, addressing John. "Truly are you sent here to teach us those things left unfinished by Quetzalcoatl. Have you seen our god, the great Quetzalcoatl? Then come this day at noon."

At noon John and Tom were waiting in the palace court. The prince and the princess held them by the hands, chatting gayly while their father sent to notify the priests that they would inspect the temple. The six holy men met them at the main entrance, and after fumigating them with incense, led the way through great gloomy rooms to the inner quadrangle. There was the same internal arrangement as in the other public buildings, but here the façades were elaborately sculptured. The west front instantly claimed their attention. Enveloped in a maze of hieroglyphics was the masterpiece of Itza sculpture—the great Feathered Serpent. Its richly carved body extended the whole length of the wall, one hundred and sixty feet, twisted and coiled about the characters of stone that filled the spaces between the cornices. The many different stones that were joined together to form his body were so delicately

chiselled as to appear ornamented with feathers, the tail terminating in the rattle of the rattlesnake, the head adorned with the plumes of the Quetzal, and in the open mouth was held the head of a human being. It was well calculated to awe, well calculated to represent an omnipotent being. Before this immense effigy the cacique prostrated himself, and the priests silently offered incense. But the young men stood erect, while the prince and princess watched them tremblingly, uncertain whether to kneel or to stand.

the result. If they are alive and powerful they will turn on us our own thunder; if not, they will stand silent and shattered."

The king's eye, troubled and thoughtful, fell before John's gaze. Twice he tried to speak, but paused. At last he said:

"Let me tell the history of the Feathered Serpent. Let us sit in the shade of this corridor. I speak of a time so remote that all men have forgotten when that time was. But then appeared Quetzalcoatl, genera-



"THE GOD WE WORSHIP IS A LIVING GOD," SAID JOHN.

"How is this," demanded the cacique. "Do you come into the presence of the great Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, without bowing down? Are you not afraid of his vengeance?"

"The God we worship," replied John, "is a living God. We cannot prostrate ourselves before any image of stone or wood."

"Offer this 'image' insult," returned the cacique, "and his fire will consume you."

A sudden bold idea seized John.

"We, the Teules," said he, "will face your idols with our thunder-charged weapons. We will abide

tions after the great flood. Among our neighbors, the Mexicans, who were soon to be divided amongst themselves, slaying one another, this great white man, with calm face and flowing beard, landed at the river Panuco, coming from the East. His palace he built at Tullan, and there he devoted his life to the instruction of the people. He taught them how to cut the chalchihuite, the green emeralds, and how to work silver and gold. He built himself palaces, one of emeralds, one of silver, another of shells, one of all kinds of precious woods, one of turquoise and another of bright feathers. His commands were

made known by a crier, who shouted from the hilltop of Tullan, and his shoutings could be heard for more than one hundred leagues around, even to the seacoast. The people loved and worshiped him; for the useful arts he taught, for the peace and prosperity of his reign, and that he would not allow the shedding of blood in sacrifice, preferring flowers and the incense of forest gums. But at last some evil chiefs rebelled, and it so grieved him that he retired from his people. He destroyed his palaces, buried his treasures, and sent the sweet singing birds (abounding where now there are none), to go before him to the Land of the Sun. Ye may trace his progress through Mexico, by tradition, and by the monuments he reared on his retreat. Ye may still find the pyramids of Teotihuacan, monuments to the Sun, and Moon, and that of Cholula, than which there is none larger on earth. From Cholula he marched with his followers to the sea, embarking at the river Coatzacoalcas, and then the Mexicans lost sight of him forever. But he appeared later to a branch of our family, the Mayas, having only crossed an arm of the great gulf and landed at Champoton. The Mayas received him gladly; they followed his precepts, built him palaces and temples, and they flourished. They would have kept him amongst them, but the time drew nigh when he must really depart for the Land of the Sun. He crossed Yucatan to the Eastern coast, entered his winged canoe of serpent skins, with the royal birds, the Quetzales, at the prow, and sailed away. This was the great lord, Quetzalcoatl, called by our brothers the Mayas, Kukulcan, or the Plumed Serpent.

"He comforted the people by a promise to return, and since that most remote of cycles he has been looked for anxiously. In his honor our forefathers caused this image of him to be carved in stone. For three generations of time—two cycles—a hundred years our most cunning sculptors labored upon this holy work."

"But he came not to you," said John. "How is it that you have adopted the god of the Mayas?"

"The Itzaes, my people," replied the cacique, "were the discoverers of this country of Yucatan. In remote ages our ancestors resided in the kingdom of Xibalba, to the south; explorers among them came to this valley and erected this city, and called it Chacnovitan, or the resting place. In the ages which followed, they removed to Bacalar, the birthplace of the Heavens, because there the sea supports the sky

in the east. Again they removed farther north, and founded the cities of Chichen, residence of the Tiger king, Itzamal, the Temple of the Fiera Ara, then Uxmal, where is the Temple of the Sorcerer, and many others. Cycles many passed, and the Maya people arrived from the south and west and founded Mayapan. We received them happily, but other tribes later came, and all united and made war upon us. We retreated from city to city until at last we intrenched ourselves here, repaired our walls, rebuilt our temples, and here have remained these many, many cycles.

"The leader of the Itzaes was the great Zamnu, whose statue ye may see above the royal avenue. Like the Plumed Serpent, he taught his followers. But he was a man, albeit with the breath of God moving him to great deeds—but still a man, who, when he died, we buried; his head at Itzamal, his right arm at Chichen, his body at Uxmal, and his heart in the city he had founded—here, in our ancient and holy Chacnovitan. He represented, alike with Quetzalcoatl, the power and goodness of our Great Spirit who dwells in the Sun, who has retreated beyond the region of the Snow King. Thus, ye see, it is not this carven image of glistening stone that we really worship, but honoring it, we honor the mighty power, the goodness, that it symbols. Listen further. For uncounted centuries have our people borne in mind the parting message of Kukulcan, that he would send messengers to re-establish the reign of peace and wisdom. Seven cycles ago there came to our shores* great houses with wings that moved upon the water, bearing men in armor, and animals that obeyed those men like their own wills. These, my ancestors thought, are the messengers of Kukulcan. But, alas, they brought not peace! their hearts lusted for gold; they brought the sword and death to millions of our race. They were not the messengers of the Plumed Serpent. All this vast country was enslaved, all but my own people, who have thus far escaped their search, for they have heard of us, these monsters from a strange land, and for six cycles have hunted for us.

"Ye see now why it is no man ever hath seen our city and returned to tell the tale. Our friends without mercilessly slay every stranger; should he by any chance enter the city, he is never allowed to leave. Ye see now also why ye were allowed to enter; because ye were believed by Christobal to be messen-

* Probably the Spaniards under Cordova Grijalva and Cortes.

gers from Quetzalcoatl. By your own admission, *ye are not*; else ye would not wish to destroy his symbols. Still, I know ye not, only that ye must be Teules. Ye have instructed us for our good. We love you for that ye have done, for what ye are. And ye are willing prisoners — are ye not?"

Prince Zan threw his arms about Tom's neck, the princess laid her soft cheek against John's face and whispered, "Tell my father *yes*."

"Yes," said John gravely, "we are willing prison-



THE HOPE OF THE CITY HUNG UPON JOHN'S AIM.

ers. Yet I will now warn you that the time is coming when we shall leave you."

The cacique shook his head. "I defy you."

"Great king," replied John, "four months from this day, as the moon rides in the centre of the heavens, you, with your own hands, will open for us those massive gates of stone."

Xia had drawn herself away from John; her eyes were dilated with anger and grief, her little hands clenched. She choked and struggled with her tears. Had there been a word in the Itza tongue to express her feelings, she might have said, "I hate you," but these gentle people had no word for hate. So she cried angrily, "I love you no more!" and darted hastily into the darkness of the temple. John quickly arose, but stopped, sat down again, and buried his face in his hands.

"Thou see'st," said the cacique, "the grief of my little daughter Xia. O, my son, though we may easily confine thee by walls of stone, yet thy heart — recall thy heart, and live with us thy undivided life."

John was about to reply, when a loud blast swept through the temple — the danger-cry from the trumpet of the sentinel on the rampart! They hurried to the southern gate, climbed to the parapet, whence they could look over the valley.

"Ah," cried the cacique, "my home-returning warriors — and they are followed by the fierce Lacandones!"

Two bodies of men were savagely fighting on the skirts of the wood, one pressing towards the city, the other trying to flank them and get between them and their haven of refuge. A tall warrior, blazing in paint and feathers, stood upon a mound directing the Lacandones, and above his head waved their sacred banner. Evidently their chief.

The strangers took in the situation at a glance. John spoke hurriedly.

"The rifle! If we lay that warrior low we shall save our friends, and probably our own lives."

Tom's brief absence seemed an age. The attacking savages had divided the band of Itzaes and were shouting victory. The hopes of the city hung upon John's aim — the cacique, the priest, the people felt this. He was four hundred yards away. John adjusted his sights so the ball should strike on the flashing breast-plate. He glanced along the barrel. A puff of smoke, a loud report; the chief was unharmed.

“THE KING IS DEAD! LONG LIVE THE KING!”

CHAPTER III.



TANDING on the green mound, with one hand grasping the banner-staff, the war chief of the fierce Caribs still directed the movements of his troops. He had been exultant, for at the very moment of the arrival of the cacique on the

walls, his trained warriors had broken the Itza line, and they were driving the band towards the city with savage cries, when that sharp rifle crack sounded over the tumult. Both parties had halted instantly, the pursuer and pursued alike paralyzed by that mysterious thunderbolt. The war chief had not been harmed by the bullet, but the banner-staff had been shattered, and the banner itself had fallen to the ground. The effect had been more dire than if the chief had been struck dead, for at the fall of the banner—their sacred emblem of victory—all courage had deserted the Carib troops.

But as they were about to fly for the forest, the war chief had snatched the banner from the ground and waved it above his head, turning his fierce warriors again upon the Itzaes who had rallied. The clash of arms, the horrid din and shouting now once more filled the air. The Itzaes, though fighting bravely, were again overwhelmed by numbers, and the Caribs came on, crowding them into the moat.

“You’re too tender-hearted, John,” groaned Tom. “Give me the rifle. It’s an awful thing to kill even a Carib chief, but when it will be the means of saving a thousand others, I hold it’s a sin not to do it. Give me the rifle, I say.”

“No, Tom, I’ll give superstition one more trial.” Again that mysterious explosion arrested the contending warriors, and again the sacred banner was dashed to the ground.

But this old Carib chief was a man of no common mould. Believing though he did that these thunderbolts came from the skies, he yet bade defiance to the supernatural forces fighting against him. A second time he snatched up the flag and rushed with it to the head of his troops. They had turned again to fly, but as before, they sprang back to the fight with cries of rage.

The young men now dashed down from the parapet.

The massive stone gates swung open, then closed after them—the cacique and the two young strangers followed close by their bodyguard. The cacique bore the ponderous spear of his fathers, and wore upon his left arm the great gleaming shield of gold adorned with feathers; a helmet of the same precious metal protecting his head, three feathers of the Quetzal, the sacred bird of Itzamna, hanging from its crest.

It was a desperate measure. Scarce had they crossed the drawbridge when they were on the skirts of the struggling throng. “Revolvers!” shouted John.

“Aye, revolvers; only we can save the Itzaes!” cried Tom in return.

On either side of the cacique they rushed into the thick of the fray, each with a six-shooter in his right hand, and a belt of cartridges around his waist. The astonished warriors, Carib and Itza, beheld this fearful force advancing; the golden-shielded cacique in his flashing armor, flanked by two strange young white warriors who bore death-dealing weapons spitting fire and smoke!

The Itzaes raised a cry that shook the walls: “Our cacique! Victory! Victory!!” Even the wounded raised themselves from the ground and staggered to the fight again.

Dismay spread through the Carib ranks, but the old war chief refused to fly. Around him and the sacred banner gathered the bravest of his troops. Upon them advanced the cacique, and his fiery aids supported by the Itzaes.

Flushed as the young men were with the strange

ardor of fight, they coolly fired and charged, alternately keeping up a continuous fire. Spears, darts, and arrows were aimed at them, but the Itza warriors successfully interposed their shields.

One by one the Caribs fell, and at last they fled, with cries of terror, to the wood until the old war-chief stood alone, in his left hand the banner, in his right a spear with head of polished bronze. He was a giant as compared with the Itzaes, and his shining helmet rose full a foot above the level of their own.

"Back!" shouted the cacique to his men; "he is mine. Mine to take or to slay as I will it!"

The boys had held their fire. They revolted against shooting a brave man so evidently at their mercy. "Fair play," cried Tom, and John, though he said nothing, dropped his gun. The Itza army was in wild tumult. The life of their great cacique should not be staked against that of a barbarous Carib chief. Still at the gesture of command they fell back. The duel begun. Bands of Caribs came stealthily out from the forest to watch. The cacique advanced; the Carib made a savage lunge which the Itza parried with his shield, at the same instant throwing forward his heavy spear and piercing the Carib through and through. But the wily Carib had drawn back his own spear, and as the cacique darted forward, met him full upon its point! They fell together — two brave men.

With a wild howl, the Caribs drew back into the wood and disappeared, and the Itzaes turned toward the city gates. It was a mournful procession that bore the cacique across the drawbridge, and beneath the arch of the southern gate. He yet breathed feebly, and as they laid him on a couch in his royal palace, he opened his eyes. John was bending over him, his face showing the sorrow he felt. Xia and Prince Zan were silent with grief. This sudden calamity had absorbed the resentment of the little princess against John, and she clung to his hand in pitiful grief. The cacique asked for the chief priest. He came. His five companions, all holy men, stood beside him. He motioned John to kneel, placed his hand on his head. He spoke with effort:

"This is my successor! I command ye that ye make him king!" The priests, though in consternation, signified their assent, but John himself sprang to his feet in protest. Yet the hand extended to bless him fell so heavily, the dying eyes gazed into his so beseechingly, that he could not utter his refusal.

The dying cacique spoke but once more: "My children, I go to the Land of the Sun."

The young prince and princess of the Itzaes now were fatherless. Xia threw her arms about John's neck and clung to him sobbing, while Zan fell upon the couch in overwhelming grief. John stood by them silent, stupified with many troubled thoughts.

After two days the people assembled to conduct the remains of their king to their last resting-place, in the great cavern where reposed his ancestors. If they felt grief, they dissembled it. They spoke to one another with philosophy: "It is well that our beloved cacique should have gone before us, for Quetzalcoatl will grant him a kingdom in the Land of the Sun; and to this he will invite us when we also depart."

The same week the new cacique was installed.



THE DUEL.

They would have made the ceremonies the most gorgeous that ever were witnessed in the city, but John refused. He promulgated his first decree, that he accepted the crown only in obedience to the will of their late king; that he should only hold it in order to act as an all-powerful guardian to prince Zan, the rightful heir, until he should be old enough to govern. This decree was received submissively, as another evi-

dence of the god-like wisdom of the young Teule. Since the daring rush upon the Caribs, the Itzaes openly worshipped the white warriors. Tom was elected their war-chief; a post of high honor and second only in importance to John's own caciqueship. They both were installed in the royal palace; the lit-



AN EVIL WIZARD.

tle prince and princess shared with them the royal table; the household of the late king, his well drilled attendants and retinue of servants were placed at their disposal. However, perhaps warned by the gravity of the priests, Cacique John saw fit to issue a second promulgation similar to the first:

that the prince and princess were by all to be looked upon as lawful sovereigns in minority and the strangers as their prime ministers or generals.

There was one event to which in the hurry and confusion of the battle John had attached small importance. But now the high priest brought it to his royal notice. The Itzaes had fetched from their mountain retreat of the Lacondones an important captive—indeed, it was the capture of this man that had brought the Caribs to the valley of the Silver City.

The new cacique now learned that the Caribs, though a ruder people than the Itzaes—hunters and nomads rather than agriculturists—still possessed a capital city, though its rude houses were nearly all of wood and thatch.

This town was built near a great cliff in the mountains, at the base of which extended an immense cavern, very high and dry, in which they had deposited their dead from time immemorial. These bodies were prepared with gums and bitumen; in fact, made mummies, and in this state would remain a thousand years.

As keeper of this burial cavern they had always contrived to secure a captive from some other nation. This was in obedience to tribal traditions. Once in a great number of years they managed to capture a Spaniard or white Mexican; such a keeper they highly cherished, honoring him above all other men, but keeping him closely guarded. Ten or eleven years ago John learned they had taken an important prisoner in one of their annual excursions to the sea. He was a white man, but not a Spaniard. He spoke a language none had ever heard. They found him on the shore a wanderer—a tall, slim, sad man.

They named him "Him-whom-the-sea-cast-up," for they saw no boat by which he could have reached the shore, and took him to their capital city and set him as custodian of the burial cave. Year after year passed away and this mysterious white man still held this position. Never once in all that time did the suspicious Caribs remit their watch of him, though he was allowed to walk about the village and even explore the forest, followed by a guard. He learned the language of the tribe, but held little conversation. He loved little children, and they loved him in return. But he seemed always oppressed by melancholy thoughts. Day after day he would climb the great cliff and sit looking over the forest towards the sea eastward.

One day, seated on the cliff, he beheld a body of strangers approaching—different Indians from the Caribs; they were clothed, while the Caribs wore but a waist girdle. When they had drawn nearer, he saw their faces were milder. They were, in fact, a group of Itza hunters, who had strayed farther than usual, looking for game. The poor cavern keeper looked about him; his guard was asleep. He cautiously crawled a distance, then arose and ran in the direction the Itzaes had taken.

They received him warmly, and hastened away with him to join the main body of hunters. The Caribs were soon on their track, furiously demanding back the keeper of their sacred cavern. But it is a law among the Itzaes never to deliver up a creature that has claimed their protection. Sooner, they would fight until the last man fell. The rage of the Caribs was awful. They gathered all their warriors and pursued the retreating Itzaes, reaching them as they neared the margin of the valley.

In the fight that ensued the stranger fought desperately on the side of the Itzaes; but having received a slight wound, he was not taken direct to the Strangers' House, but to the home of one of the hunters, where he was kindly cared for. After the burial of the cacique, and the installation of their new king, and after the tumult of feasting had subsided, he was assigned a room in the Strangers' House, and now Cacique John was apprised of his presence and his history.

John was strangely stirred by this recital. Tom gazing upon his paling cheek, himself felt a thrilling shiver of excitement. Without delay or ceremony, they proceeded to the Strangers' House, exchanging no word of their vague presaging. They found a

tall, finely-formed man who looked to be about fifty years of age. A great beard covered his face and fell nearly to his belt. His countenance was sad and marked with deep lines. He welcomed them courteously, but in a strange tongue. John spoke to him in Spanish, then in Itzae, but he did not understand. He fastened upon him his great mournful eyes and tried in vain to utter some intelligible word in response. By signs, he inquired from whence they came, touching his own face, and pointing to theirs,

him, evidently trying to frame some articulate sound which his lips refused to utter. With a gesture of despair, he relaxed his hold and covered his face with his hands. They approached to comfort him, but he motioned them back, and they left him leaning against the wall.

"I've been thinking, John," said Tom suddenly, "maybe that this man could tell you something of interest if he could speak."

John's voice trembled as he replied: "Find



"WHOSE? WHOSE?"

signifying his knowledge that all were white men. They pointed Northward. He looked at them fixedly, but there was little of their appearance to betray their nationality. Four months had passed since they were taken prisoners, and their hair had grown long like that of the Indians, and was cut across their foreheads in the same style, while their costumes were of the Itza men of the higher rank.

But as they turned to depart, after trying to assure the stranger of their protection, Tom made a remark to John in English. He felt his shoulder grasped at once; the bearded stranger stared upon

whether there is one of our warriors who can speak the Carib dialect; if so, bring him to me."

The occupant of the Strangers' House remained for a long hour leaning against the wall; then he sought his hammock. He looked about him aimlessly; as though his thoughts were wandering against his will. A few articles remained that belonged to the young men. A gun stood in the corner, the wooden chest also. It was this chest that finally fastened his attention. He walked to it, and at last opened the lid. In it he saw cartridges, some civilized clothes, and a book. These objects evi-

dently interested him. He held up the clothes. They were of Northern make; evidently they were familiar to him. Mechanically he took up the book and looked at the title on the back. It glared at him in great gilt letters, as it had at many a man, young and old, before, in a far-away New England garret. He vaguely shook his head over it. The book—the old wizard, necromantic book—in its turn seemed to look at this half-barbaric stranger as he turned its pages, leering up at him through its eyes of gilt. But he saw dimly, for letters—if he had ever known them—had grown strange to him during his years of exile.

But summoning back to him recollections of the past, from the obscurity of years, his intelligence finally interpreted the meaning of the characters upon which he gazed: *THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO*. By ONE OF THE CONQUERORS.

The book fell from his now nerveless grasp, the lid of the chest dropped with a crash and imprisoned it in darkness. The man staggered to his hammock and threw himself face downward. But presently he rose and groped toward the chest again, raised the lid tremblingly, drew the book from its hiding place, and bore it to his hammock.

"If two leaves are gone," reasoned the wretched man to himself, "it is *the same book*—that hated book that sent me hither possessed with that insane idea, twelve years ago. No, it is all here—ha! but they are loose and they are crumpled!"

How that hated book must have rejoiced at the man's surprise! To see him start and clutch his beard, to see him gaze wildly at those crumpled leaves, was something for an evil wizard to enjoy. To hear him mutter: "The *very same* that I myself tore out of that infernal book when I left home! How did these leaves get back again? Who found them in that tin box in the cabin of my wrecked vessel, and fitted them into the place from which I tore them twelve years ago? How has this book itself been borne hither?"

Suddenly a gleam of glad light shot into those wild eyes. A sudden impulse seized him, shook him, set him in fierce, swift action. He hurried from the house, down the royal avenue, and breathless, into the palace. There he found the young cacique examining some birds which had just been brought him from the forest. He looked up as this excited stranger entered, then with a change of countenance, arose to receive him. The man held out before him

John's own book. He cried out excitedly, "Whose? whose?" It was all the English his long unused memory could recall.

"Mine," answered the young man in English, grasping both the book and the thin, hard hand that held it.

He pointed to John's name on the fly-leaf. "Whose?" again demanded he.

"Mine!" John again replied, gazing at him with intense feeling.

The book fell to the floor. The poor bewildered stranger extended his arms with a look of entreaty.

A thousand emotions struggled together in the young man's heart, but in all this confusion he was conscious that before him was he for whom he was about to search the whole wilderness of Yucatan; that his father stood before him!

When half an hour later War-chief Tom entered the room, it is hard to say whether or not he was surprised to see the Carib captain and the cacique sitting together, joy visible on every feature. Since the Silver City itself had proved a verity, it was nothing so very strange that John's lost father should turn up.

"Powerful glad to see you here," said he, shaking his hand heartily. "John and me's been thinkin' for some time of callin' 'round your way."

But the man could answer only with a vague smile. The tears came into John's eyes. "Tom," said he, "we shall have another to teach now, for my father's been so long among the Indians that he's forgotten even the simplest words of English."

It was indeed weeks before the poor old New England captain recovered much knowledge of his native tongue. But he was by nature endowed with great energy, and he resolutely began with the alphabet which he had learned forty years before; and when he had acquired the letters anew, he set patiently to work to join sentences. Even little Xia could excel him for a long, long time. But there came a miracle. Suddenly, one day, all his forgotten knowledge rushed over him like a wave, and he spoke his own language readily.

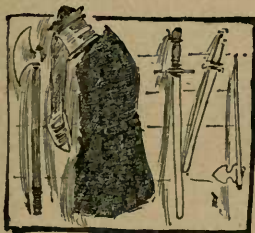
It was a long story that he told them of his adventures: too long to repeat here; and since his own had been so strange, it was no great marvel to him that his son too had been shipwrecked, and that they thus had found each other. But he never tired of questioning John about his mother and brother. Twelve long years had separated him from them, and

now that the veil of darkness had been partially lifted, his desire to see them daily grew stronger and stronger, causing John to make rapid plans for future action. Whatever his own future might be, it was his first duty to enable his father to return home.

He immediately undertook to obtain news from

the mate and Don Pedro.

During his captivity, now nearly five months, he had had no word from these old comrades, though he and Tom had lain awake many a night speculating upon what the chances had been of their escape from the Mayas.



OLD SPANISH ARMOR.

The body-guard furnished by Chief Christobal, had remained devotedly attached to John's service; and now, two of them being consulted, offered to return to Tuloom, and take canoe for Cozumel, with a letter for the mate. This expedition was to be kept secret from not only the Itzaes, within the city, but from the Mayas at Chan Santa Cruz. The messengers felt sure they could avoid their Maya friends, by a wide circuit, and they swore to deliver their message should they escape with their lives.

John wrote a long letter, explaining the romantic fortunes that had befallen them, using thin paper, and Tom also wrote a similar message. These two letters the Indians concealed in their long black hair.

They were well equipped for a long march; had a stock of sharpest of arrows, a strong knife each, and a pack of provisions, snugly strapped to their shoulders. They promised to return in three weeks, and John bidding them good-by, felt with a strange regret, and yet a deep relief, that they had sent out a thread to connect them again with civilization.

He now turned his attention once more to the internal improvement of the city. Tom had made another discovery. Having been appointed war chief, he had felt it his duty, as well as his great delight, to drill his troops every day, and in marching and counter-marching, he visited every portion of the city, and often conducted his men into the outlying fields for wider range of evolutions. It was outside the city, and by rather a ludicrous accident, that he made the important discovery. He fell over a sharp-pointed aloe and tore a long rent in his robe. There were no pins at hand, neither needle and thread; but one of his soldiers improvised both. He

cut a leaf of the aloe that had torn the rent, and pounding it until all the pulpy portion had been removed, left the fibres or filaments hanging from the sharp thorn that terminated the leaf—a bundle of threads attached to a sharp needle—a needle ready threaded. With this the Indian sewed up the tear and the troops went on with their drill.

John at once saw that the plant was the famous Sisal hemp; the *Agave Sisalensis*, the fibre of which is so valuable that thousands of bales, four hundred weight each, are now shipped every year from Yucatan. Here it was growing wild, without culture, and whenever an Indian wanted thread for a garment he cut down a plant, pounded out the pulp of the leaves, dried the fibres, and so was provided.

Investigating, they found the people scraped the leaves with a long sharp stick called a *tonkos*; a slow and tedious process. Why not endow them with another valuable piece of machinery?

So the Teules and the Carib captive consulted. The result was a rather rude, but very effective monument of their friendliness—a large wooden wheel with sharp stones fastened as teeth into its circumference. When revolving, a *henequen* leaf—*henequen* is the Maya for the hemp—was pressed against it by means of a lever, the pulp scraped off instantly, and the silken fibres left soft and clean ready for drying. It was hailed as a gift from the gods—a great invention—and was kept in constant use by the people until they had fibre enough piled up to last their own use a hundred years.

"But is there any good in it?" asked Tom one day. "It saves labor, to be sure, but bymeby such

a simple people will have nothing to do, if we go on inventing labor-saving machinery. What a pile of money we could make out of this hemp business if we only had a transportation and a market! Then there's the coffee, and the sugar, and twenty other things that ain't developed; see?"

"Suppose, Tom," answered John, "that we could bring our city into communication with the coast, would you be willing to do it? Think how soon this simple race would become the prey of heartless traders! How long before their peace and innocence



PLATE ARMOR.

would be destroyed? Tom, a million dollars laid before me now, would not tempt me to give my consent to this ruin of my people."

"That's so, John; money ain't everything," sighed Tom, "though I wish I had some myself."

"It was gold," continued John, "that caused the ruin of the Aztec empire of Mexico. To gain it, Cortez and his soldiers destroyed millions of innocent people. Before and since, for gold in the West Indies, and in South America, the Spaniards



ENTRANCE TO THE CAVERN OF THE IDOLS.

depopulated whole islands, torturing men, women, and children to death. I hope my people will never know this accursed preciousness of money."

"Yet," added Tom slyly, "one reason of your coming down to look for this city was the report that its walls were all of silver, and that there were whole caverns full of gold, and so forth, though I will say you didn't seem much took aback when we found out the silver walls were only white stone that looked like silver when the sun shone on it, and that the region didn't have no treasures, except what the priest and king were guarding."

John laughed. "It has been impossible to spend

here even the money that we brought with us."

Taking down their old money-belts, John spread their contents on the white stone floor, a shining heap of golden dollars, and looked on amused while Zan and Xia played with the coins.

"They shine," said the princess, "like the treasure in the caverns of the idols. Have you seen that treasure my ancestors captured from the Quiches?"

John's father, who was sitting near, looked up. "John, I have heard among the Caribs of that treasure," he said. "There was a fabulous amount of golden ingots, silver, and gems, which the Itzaes captured from a wandering band of Quiches, who were on their way from the coast where they had sacked a town, a church, and a merchant ship. Can my daughter show it to us?" said he, turning to Xia. "As you are cacique here," he added, turning to John, "I suppose we may inspect as we like."

John answered gravely: "I have not yet measured my strength with the priests."

But the little princess had risen eagerly and placed her hand in that of John's father.

"Yes, my father; why not?" said she. "My brother and I will conduct you. It is in a mighty cave under the temple. We shall need torches."

By John's orders, the ever-faithful body-guards were despatched for torches, and then Zan and Xia led the way to the temple. None of the priests disputed their entrance, or questioned of their errand. They walked straight to the curtain that hung behind the altar which concealed the skeleton and the great armor that had so frightened Tom when he had been set up as an idol. They paused a moment to gaze on the helmets and breastplates, the chain-armor, lances, swords, and arquebuses, piled at the feet of the hideous idol that had grinned at Tom on that eventful day months before. All the armor was of the kind worn by the Spanish conquerors, and was probably taken by the Quiches when they sacked the town. The idol was theirs also, and had been considered a great trophy of ancient Itza valor.

Turning sharply around a pedestal, the little party faced a wide black opening from which a strong draught of air blew cold and damp. As they bent to look within, a bird flew out of the gloom and almost dashed into their faces. Xia clapped her hands gleefully:

"Oh! there is Toh, the only bird that did not sail in the ark when the great flood came."

AN UNDERGROUND RAMBLE.

CHAPTER IV.



OH they saw to be a strange-shaped bird, with a saw-toothed bill, a back covered with silky green feathers, and with a black velvety pendant hanging from his breast. But his queerest

feature was his long tail. He had an ordinary tail of short feathers, but beyond this stuck out or hung down two slender feathers about a foot in length. Each one looked as if it had been stripped of all its barbs, leaving only the shaft, or quill, with a little oval tip of feathers at the end.

The torches were quickly lighted. They revealed a smooth face of rock. Down the perpendicular sides was cut a narrow stairway. From little holes and fissures in the rock streamed out the denuded tail feathers of numerous Tohs hovering their eggs or young. Very few seemed alarmed as the party passed down, only flirting their tails and uttering expostulatory squeaks, and then Xia related the tradition of Toh's survival of the great flood.

Now do not suppose all their conversations carried on as fluently as here seems. This instead was frequently interrupted by many hitches when her New England hearers utterly failed to comprehend the little princess' most careful Itza as she related the Indian tradition, dating from early times, a tradition colored perhaps by Spanish priests.

"It was a long time ago," began she, "many thousand years before your grandfather and my grandfather were born. The God of the Air looked down on the people of earth and saw they were bad. He thought them too bad to live and rear children

that might be worse. So he made the waters of the skies to descend and cover the earth, even the tops of the mountains. But there was one man who had built a great canoe, and he determined to save all the animals, two of every kind. And when his canoe was finished and rain began to fall, his family went into the covered part of the canoe, and all the animals followed. Oh, there were many, many creatures, and many, many days did it take for them to find places for themselves! But there were bad beasts as well as bad men that did not believe the great flood was coming. They laughed at the great cacique during his many years of labor on the canoe. And this bird, this wicked Toh—who had another name then—sat on the branch of a tree above the great canoe works and laughed at the wise cacique also.

"Still the good animals tried to make Toh enter with them. The cacique also reasoned with him, and even tried to catch him and his mate, but only succeeded in pulling out some feathers from their tails.

"Then Toh laughed: 'Toh!' he said (which means go along), 'I won't go into your old canoe.'

"Then the tiger leaped up and caught Toh by the tail, but only pulled out a few more feathers. Toh moved farther up the branches, and cried out: 'Toh! Go along! who's afraid of you?'

"The elephant was the next to enter, and his little sharp eyes saw Toh mocking at him in the tree. He reached up his long trunk and almost caught Toh by the neck, but he twisted away so that the elephant only pulled a few more little feathers out of his tail.

"By this time the tail was all pulled out except the two long feathers that we see him wear to-day, and he was very angry. He climbed higher up the tree and scolded the elephant long after he entered the great canoe. 'Toh!' he shrieked: 'Go along, you great mountain of meat! I wouldn't be seen in the same canoe with you. Toh, toh, toh!'

"After the canoe was full and the waters had covered all the earth except this one mountain, on a

tree of which Toh still hovered, the cacique looked out of the door and said: 'Toh! there is room for just two more. We haven't any of your kind in here.'

"'Oh, I sha'n't be drowned! toh! Shove along with your old canoe!'

"After a moon and part of a moon had passed away, the cacique sent out a humming-bird to look for land; and it flew swiftly all around and returned with a leaf. The next day he sent out a vulture, which found the bodies of many drowned creatures,

the flood, only with his tail stripped by beasts."

"That's a pretty yarn," remarked Tom. "Wonder where the little woman got it from?"

They afterward found it to be a Maya tradition; one of those stories that the Indians call *Tales told by the old Men!* Nearly every wild animal of Yucatan they learned had some fanciful story connected with it by these simple people.

They had descended the stone stairs and had been sitting upon a great stone altar at the mouth of the



IN THE CAVE OF THE IDOLS.

and so never returned. And when the humming-bird had been out again and did not come back, then the cacique knew the waters had left the land, and he guided his canoe to a mountain. The first sound the animals heard when they stepped out of the canoe was the mocking voice of Toh. And they said among themselves: 'There's that horrid Toh. I did hope he had been drowned! I don't believe there was any use of being shut up for a moon and half a moon in that awful canoe, after all.'

"How Toh escaped the deluge nobody could tell, but he did; and we see him now just as before

cavern. Now they arose, the six flaming torches lighting up the walls with a strong red glare.

"This is probably the Cave of the Idols," said John's father, "of which I have heard among the Lacandones. When the Spaniards first arrived in Yucatan the temples scattered all over the peninsula, now in ruins, were adorned with statuary, representing kings that had died, priests, and great warriors. Some of the Spanish priests, no one knows why, taught the people that these images were capable of working them harm, and advised them to destroy them. They themselves broke up many valuable

works of art, and burned volumes of Indian history that can never be replaced. But the Itzaes—at least those of this city—were not brought under this evil, destructive influence, and did not share in the spreading superstitions. It is said that, alarmed by reports from the Mayas, their chief men gathered in all the precious national statues within reach, and deposited them in a secret cavern, probably this one; we will soon see.”

John saw at a glance that the cavern was one of those natural formations that abound in the vast bed of coral rock that constitutes the greater part of Yucatan. Great pillars of limestone supported the arched roof, and long passages extended far, far out of sight.

Entering, they saw, seated upon shelves hollowed out from the sides of the cavern, the famous idols and statues. One, of colossal proportions, was the image of a woman with the head of a dog; another had the head of a wolf and another the feet of a fowl. These all Zan explained represented a single fabled monster that used to prowl abroad and worry the Indians after nightfall.

“In our ancient times,” said he, evidently repeating a familiar tradition, “this spectre took the shape of a woman—of a lovely *mestiza*—and walked abroad at night, wearing in her hair the flower of the plant called *sache tobay*. She charmed her victim, and when he pursued, she fled, then retraced her steps and allowed herself to be reached. Her lovers always died of a slow fever, finding in place of the enchanting *Mestiza*, a figure full of thorns, and with feet as thin as a fowl’s.

“And here,” continued the Prince, pointing to a figure of a giant who spanned the pathway with massive stone legs, spread wide apart, “is still another shape in which this monster delighted to affright our brothers, the Mayas. He used to walk forth into the city at night, and, placing his feet on each side the street, crush all that passed between them by bringing his legs together. Ah! he was the worst giant, but the *enanos* were the most troublesome. Here are the *enanos*.”

They had now reached a collection of curious images, forty or fifty in number, each about a foot in height, of most grotesque forms, and with hideous heads. These were the dwarfs, or pigmies, or *enanos*, who once lived in Yucatan. The legend is that God formed man from a handful of earth and *sacate* grass, and made several trials before he was satisfied with

his work. First, there came to earth the giants, who were a mild race, though so large, and these were followed by the dwarfs. These dwarfs annoyed the giants much. They built many little cities the ruins of which may be seen to-day in Northern Yucatan. They also delighted in pestering the Indians, and the latter did not feel safe until all their images were destroyed, or else secured in this cavern of the Itzaes.

As Xia, who had strolled away to look at some distant statue, came dancing back, she flashed into their faces the rays of a strange phosphorescent light. “I declare,” exclaimed Tom, “if she ain’t got a dozen or more of them fireflies made into a sort of a lantern. Yes, and look at our bodyguard, too, every mothers’s son of ’em with a firefly fastened to his big toe!”

“Amongst the Caribs,” said John’s father, “there is but little other light. They call them God’s lanterns, and say he sent them especially for the poor Indians.”

“They are bigger than ours up North,” said Tom; “why! one of these gives out light enough to see to read by!”

Here an exclamation from Prince Zan drew them on. They found him with his eyes riveted to the wall above him.

“*The red hand!* sure as I’m alive!” cried Tom. Even the eight brave young men of the bodyguard recoiled as they discovered this dread symbol upon the rock. Even John and Tom grew grave when they remembered Don Pedro’s prediction regarding the red hand found in the ruins of Tuloom, and how fully it had been verified. It was stamped directly over an arched opening into a passage which evidently terminated that portion of the cavern, and which led into an immense sacred treasure vault, Zan explained.

John pointed out the omen to his father. “Yes,” said he, “this symbol, the Indians say, is the sign of the ‘Lord of the Ruins,’ who watches over his property, himself dwelling in invisible regions. He has, they say, sealed such places with his own hand dipped in his own blood. We are to disregard the warning at our peril.”

“Never mind; come on!” shouted Tom.

Glancing reassuringly at the little Prince and Princess, John and his father followed Tom into the dark vault. The atmosphere was stifling. Xia, following, clung to John’s hand, and Zan, finding his voice, implored them not to advance. Shamed by

the courage of their masters, the torch-bearers now went ahead, though tremulously. They soon came to a series of arched openings extending along the walls of the vault, some of them closed by slabs of stone; others had fallen in. Each slab that was in place bore the same warning: *the red hand*.

"It means hands off, of course," said Tom, "but it was intencioned to apply to Indians, not to Yankees," and he wrenched off a slab, and thrust a torch into the opening. His cry of exultation drew the others around him. They rubbed their eyes as though gazing at the sun. A glittering heap of golden vessels, urns, cups, plates, salvers, ewers, incense-burners, lay there reflecting back the torchlight. "So much for Slab Number One," remarked Tom. "Now we'll just dare Hand Number Two."

"Gently, Tom," whispered John. "Remember that to our Prince and Princess this is sacred ground."

"The spoils of a church," said John's father. "It has lain here probably for two hundred years or more."

There were thirteen of these arched ovens; four on each side of the vault, and five at the lower end. Here the natural formation of the cave had been improved upon by being cemented, sides and floors everywhere smooth except for some treasure receptacles, and a great and apparently very deep well that yawned in the centre.

One after another they examined these depositories, bringing to light not only treasures of value, as gold and silver, but objects of native workmanship, of which no museum in the world contained the likeness. There were several dozens of copper axes shining like gold, which the ancient Itzaes must have brought from Honduras in their trading excursions, for their country yields no metal. Until recently the existence of these copper hatchets and axes were unknown to the antiquarians of America. Among these were scattered knives and spear heads of bronze. Gold ornaments, and stones considered precious by the ancients, glowed in the gloom of the adjoining coffer. These were fashioned in strange shapes, some like alligators, tortoises and river fish, others like ears of corn, shells of the sea, and birds. The largest and most beautiful gold ornament was wrought in the shape of a serpent, with scales like feathers, and eyes gleaming like diamonds. "The image of our Master, Kukulcan," whispered the two royal children simultaneously.

Then there was the golden *ara* with fiery eyes,

Kinich-kakamo, also once adored as a deity, and an exquisitely chiselled golden Quetzal, that emblem of the great feathered serpent, the royal bird of Quiché.

The actual value of these curiosities cannot be estimated; even this party, little versed as they were in antiquarian lore, were impressed by the fact that their value to science far exceeded that of the precious metal of which they were composed.

Battle axes and rude weapons of stone, implements of warfare and for domestic use, filled two other vaults. One of these when opened gave out an odor so penetrating that it made every member of the party



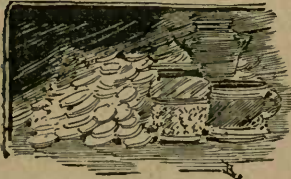
IN THE TREASURE CAVERNS.

sneeze violently. When they could examine, they found most wonderful feather garments, kept from decay by the properties of this powerful perfume.

There were shields covered with bright feathers, head-dresses, girdles and breastplates gleaming with the metallic hues of the breast plumage of the ocellated turkey. "This must have been an Aztec capture," remarked John thoughtfully, "for the inhabitants of Yucatan were not skilled in feather-work like their brother Indians of Mexico." Amongst the gold ornaments they discovered specimens of the chalchihuitl, the emerald stone found only in Central

and South America, and extremely rare and precious.

But in the five farther cells they came upon that which — though it at first puzzled them — promised to be more precious to Science than all the objects of



A GLITTERING HEAP.

gold and silver. Each cell contained a great book of bark, folded after the manner of a Japanese historic painting. Upon each side of the leaf were printed strange characters — hieroglyphics. Each book when

opened was nine or ten feet long, its leaves about eight inches long and four wide. When folded, it looked like an ordinary book enclosed between two broad covers. Very reverently John removed these ancient volumes from their hiding-places. He informed his companions in a whisper that they were probably looking upon the oldest written records of human history in America.

His father confirmed his statement. "We have probably," said he, "fallen upon what learned men have been looking for in vain, for many years. These are the libraries of the *H. Menes*, or the wise men of Yucatan, buried centuries ago. Tradition has told of them, but until to-day nobody has seen them who could make it known to the world. And too, could we read those characters inscribed upon the stone walls of the temple, we should probably have something of the history of the race."

"Do you think it could be mastered?" inquired John.

"Yes; but it would take years, perhaps. One would have to devote all his time."

A settled purpose was already forming in John's mind. He looked wistfully at the books. He felt strangely lifted beyond self, kindred, country. He was conscious of a purpose, a life work, a mission. But he remained silent.

The torches were flickering now, and one of the guardsmen suggested return. They stood crowded about the lower end of the vault, the Indians as interested as the young white men.

"What will you do with the treasure?" Tom asked this.

"Do with it!" John repeated quickly. "Do with it! it isn't ours."

"Not ours! well, I should smile."

Tom was growing excited. There was more wea h

in this little cavern than he had ever conceived of. It seemed to him that it belonged to them, the only persons who could make use of it. He hotly resented John's Quixotic bearing in the matter. "Look here, John North," said he, "why did you come here? What was your object in seeking this Silver City? And this has been here for hundreds of years. Nobody ain't claimed it in that time, nobody don't own it. The chiefs that brought it here are all dead and gone, years and years ago. It might lay here till doomsday and these Itzaes wouldn't never use it. You are as good as a king over these Injuns, and all you've got to do is say you want the whole lot and they'd give it to you."

"And for that very reason I will not do it," said John. "They have honored me with trust; they repose in me the most perfect confidence. This is their property; it is worth many thousand dollars, perhaps half a million. No, Tom! I protect this property for my adopted people!"

But Tom was about to give way to his indignation. Captain North interfered: "John is right. Look at me, Tom, penniless, old, and with health broken. What have I to carry home to my family after a dozen years' absence? Yet I would not have my son betray this people, these helpless young sovereigns." John was deeply moved.

"I knew you would approve my decision, father?" he said simply. "And Tom is right, that I came here for gold. But I have found it under such circumstances that I cannot consider it honestly ours."

"Well, forgive a feller," said Tom. "But it does gall me to go away and leave such a mint of money with people who don't know its value."

The royal Itza children had been anxiously listening to this conversation, understanding a word here and there. They drew one another aside, and after whispering awhile, rejoined the group. Prince Zan placed his hand



ANCIENT BOOKS.

on Tom's shoulder. He spoke with truly regal dignity. "Does my brother want gold? Behold it! By law of descent, this treasure which has come from the old caciques down to my father, belongs to me and to my sister. The people own it not. It is ours. To you, my brother, to King John, my sister's brother, and

to this our new father, we give it all. Take it away. Do with it what you like, but do not frown one upon another."

Xia stood in front of John, her eyes shining almost as luminously as the fire-flies she still kept in the wicker cage. "You will have it, will you not?" she entreated, reaching up and taking his face between her hands.

Silence fell upon the party. Here was generosity that surpassed anything their cold Northern natures could have conceived. Here was a forgetfulness of self that put Tom to shame,

"I have thought of a solution of the whole thing," said John's father as he drew his adopted daughter tenderly towards him. "It is to make available, for the world's use, this precious collection of antiquities. As it is — as Tom truly remarks — these things are doing no good to any one, and the first party from outside the walls that may gain access, might destroy or waste all. Let us accept the gift conditionally. Let us transport the treasure to the North, and there dispose of it to the best advantage. These golden vessels will bring ten times their weight in gold as art treasures for some museum; these copper axes, and even the stone implements, have scientific value. We will be able to realize an immense sum, and, paying ourselves fairly for our care and service in the matter, we shall return to the Prince and Princess a most royal sum."

"I see where you come by your level head, John," said Tom. "I guess it wan't so much the money I wanted as it was to see these articles put to the best use."

John turned to the waiting children. He took their hands in his own. "I will explain to you what we will do," said he; "you will be satisfied."

They bowed their heads joyously, and as they turned to go out, little Xia, breaking away, dared John to catch her, dancing off with a carol.

Her sweet voice suddenly stopped, broken by a shout from the bodyguard, who had advanced to the mouth of the vault, the shout mingling with the dull thud of a fall. John halted, himself in the act of darting after her, a deathly faintness coming over him: she had fallen into the well!

With exclamations of horror they gathered around the opening, and thrust their torches into the blackness. It was not deep.

Low moans told them that Xia was alive, but there were other sounds that stopped their heart-

beats. Shri!ll and prolonged hisses greeted them. Two eyes like rubies looked at them. The Indians sent up a great cry: "It is the den of the holy serpent!" and fled.

John roused himself. "Come back!" he shouted indignantly. Mastered by his firmness, the Indians came back. Two sped up the tortuous passage to the temple for a rope. "Our only hope," said John, "if Xia is not already killed, is to direct the attention of the serpent to ourselves — to prevent him from making a coil and crushing her at once. Take me by the hands, father, and lower me into the well."



THE DEN OF THE "HOLY SERPENT."

His father did as directed, without a word, for his son voiced his own idea. Time was precious. There was none to spare for words. John felt around with his feet; the wall was rough, and he got a footing. But he did not try to descend as yet. He made a disturbance to attract the serpent to himself. The reptile was about ten feet below him, his eyes shining like red stars. With renewed hisses, it at last raised itself from its coil; nearer and nearer came the shining, terrible head.

"Hold me hard, father, and draw up gradually."

They saw his purpose: to cause the serpent to pur-

sue him out of the well. It was a course full of peril to themselves, but not one flinched. Tom had his revolver, as also John. The Indians held their lances. The strong arms raised him slowly, the serpent following steadily. It was within a foot of the surface, then it drew back, visibly its coil all unwound.

"Shall I shoot?" said Tom.

"No!" said John, "its fall would crush the child. Can you hold a little longer, father?"

"Yes, my son."

"Then drop me a little, then raise me to tempt the snake. Don't fear; it's a boa—its bite will not kill, but its folds can crush. We must beguile it out of the well."

There was a sound now in the passage above. The Indians shouted that they were coming with a rope. The torches were burning dimly, but in their gleam Tom prepared a noose in the centre of the rope, by John's direction, while the latter, by swinging himself before the serpent and kicking at him, kept his head in view.

"A strong rope, Tom?"

"The best ever twisted."

John's voice came once more out of the dusk: "I will make another effort to have him raise his head to the surface of the well. Two of you take the rope; you, Tom, and one of the Indians; place yourselves one on each side the well. When his head appears, drop the noose over it and draw tight! At that moment, I will shoot a ball into his brain, then I must leave the rest to you. Ready?"

"Yes; ready."

There was a silence, broken only by low moans from the little victim in the depths of the den. Provoked by the active movements of the expected prey before him, the great boa raised itself to the full extent its coil would allow. The head with its angrily glaring eyes now shone in the centre of the well; it evidently was hesitating whether to dart at its tormentor or not. Its red mouth was open, its forked tongue playing in and out like lightning.

THE QUETZAL.

CHAPTER V.



“HERE, now!” whispered John, bringing his revolver to bear upon one of those red eyes, and then dropping it to a point a few inches below, so the bullet would penetrate the brain.

The round noose in the centre of the rope drawn across the mouth of the well was suspended just above the head and held by three men. Suddenly it fell. The men at either end pulled savagely, tightening the knot about the reptile’s throat. Simultaneously with this movement came the report of the revolver, filling the cavern with deafening echoes. So near was the muzzle to the serpent’s head that the bullet opened a great wound. The monster writhed and lashed the walls of the well with its powerful tail, but not long. The men ran around to the farther side of the well, meeting, then pulled together, and the horrid body was drawn out of the den.

The well was clear. Xia was safe. But the Serpent was not yet dead. It was still capable of the destruction of the whole party. Its power of muscular contraction scarcely impaired, it lay striking out savagely.

John had been drawn up at the same instant with the serpent, and now, seizing his broad knife, he sprang into the struggling group. Two of the Indians with their lances were slashing at the serpent, leaping this way and that to avoid its blows, while those at the rope could only keep out of its way by dragging it on toward the narrow passage where it could not strike. Only one torch remained, but by its light John’s father with a nervous blow cut through the scaly skin in the mid-back; by another he severed the vertebræ, thus paralyzing the monster. The fight was now virtually over.

“Hurrah!” cried Tom, “we’ve fixed him!” Tom had held on bravely; but for his example the natives would have fled away from the horrid fight more than once.

“Now the rope and torch — this way!” shouted John. With great difficulty they unloosed the noose from the serpent, and brought it to him at the mouth of the well.

“Round my waist with it, and lower me quick,” said John. “Give me the torch! There! Now let me down!”

“Be careful, my boy; the serpent’s mate may be there,” said his father.



THE PEOPLE VIEWING THE SERPENT.

“No; for these great boas nearly always live alone,” said John cheerily.

The well was but fifteen feet deep. On the bottom he found the little princess, breathing, but unconscious.

He did not stay for a glance around, but hastily gathered her into his arms.

"Pull!" he signalled to his friends anxiously waiting above.

Tom bent and received the child, but the moment John was on his feet again he took her back in his arms, and ordered the party to make haste out into the open air.

Prince Zan seized the torch and sprang ahead. They did not halt in the temple, but hurried on to the palace, and laid the child on her own couch, in her own apartment. There was a faint sigh and smile as the jar of the hasty flight ceased and she felt herself sinking among the soft pillows. Prince Zan explained in brief words, and with an exclamation of horror. An old woman among the attendants lifted her again, and bore her into an inner apartment.

John was anxious, but he did not see her again until nightfall. However, Zan came frequently with bulletins. She had recovered; she was resting; she was eating chicken broth; she hoped John was not hurt; and at last, she wished to see the cacique, her kind brother John.

As he sat holding the little tremulous, dusky hand, one of her maids brought him a coin which she said she had taken from Xia's grasp while she lay unconscious. It was an old Spanish doubloon, a gold coin, bearing date of the early part of the seventeenth century. It must have been clutched as she lay at the bottom of the pit. He showed the coin to his father. The old man's eye grew brighter as he read the inscription.

"Do you remember," said he to Tom, "the tradition I told you, how the Itzaes captured the plunder of a Spanish city?"

"Well!" answered Tom eagerly.

"And how I said those gold and silver vessels were probably part of that plunder?"

"Just so."

"And that it was strange we did not find any coins?"

"Just so; and the coins were hidden in the serpent's well! Ain't that so? And this is one of them that our little angel grabbed when she was struggling there in the dark! Won't we be rich?"

John and his father smiled; Tom's eagerness to

be rich amused them. "A little while ago," laughed John, "you planned out our lives here. And now you only wish to get up North again and live at your ease."

"Well," said Tom, "it's getting kind o' monotonous, not to have nothing to do but to lay under a cocoanut-tree from morning till night, and just eat, sleep, and be happy. I tell you, Mr. Cacique, it's rather wearing on a feller."

"I don't call serpent-hunting monotonous," laughed John, "and it seemed to me you had a terrible dash of excitement in the fight with the Caribs. Then there's your army to drill, the Prince to instruct in mechanics, and all the improvements for a whole kingdom to invent and keep in running order. As for future adventure, I guess we could get enough outside among the Mayas and Caribs."

"Well, what's the use," said Tom, "if nobody knows all this to home! I confess I'd like to walk into one of them confounded quiet New England stores, where I used to run around barefooted, and slap down one of these old yeller doubloons on the counter and say, says I, 'Trot out the best you have now, whatever 'tis—I'll take the whole piece. You can send it up to Thomas Bolton, at the hotel. Don't remember Thomas Bolton, do you? s'pose not.' And then I'd set 'em a-remembering! I shouldn't enjoy that sort of small thing now, should I? Oh, no, not a bit of it! Course not!"

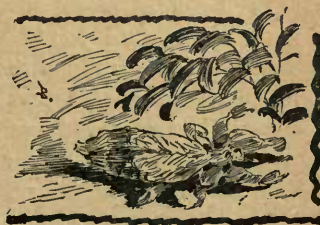
John laughed. "I don't know as I blame you. But did it ever occur to you that we are forbidden to leave this city?"

"'Twould be a pity if a king couldn't get out of his own kingdom," laughed Tom. "John, I heard you tell the cacique that day he was killed in the fight that we should get out, hook or crook, four months from that day!"

"Three months are gone, and in one month more I expect to be on my way North. But I've been puzzlin' ever

sence to think out how it's going to be did. You are cacique, to be sure, but every priest in this town has his eye on you all the same."

John smiled. "Did you ever hear of an eclipse, Tom?"



A LEAF INSECT.

"I don't see how that signifies," said Tom.

"Well, you will. The people have been asking for some sign in the sky, of my celestial origin; and about the time that total eclipse of the moon is due,



THE PALM WEEVIL.

I'm going to prophecy of its appearance to the very minute."

"I don't see how that's going to help us," said Tom.

A great noise without here interrupted. They found the serpent had been drawn

into the street. The priests learning the cause of the uproar in the cavern had protested against its removal. They declared the slaying of the snake to be a crime. It was their Sacred Serpent. Unknown to the people, they had fed him there for years. He was the guard of the secret treasure of the tribe. He had been brought hither from the forests of Tabasco. Every week they had sacrificed to him four sacred rabbits, reared in the seclusion of a distant "holy garden."

These six keepers of the temple now followed the men who were removing the serpent. They openly denounced the young cacique. "He has estranged," said they, "the people from their gods. Lo! the son and daughter of our king are daily wavering in their worship. He tells them there is but one God and that he has no visible shape on earth. Our young sovereigns, no doubt, already believe these heresies. They will soon openly cease to worship at the shrine of Quetzalcoatl. The religion, the priests, the temples of the Itzaes will ere long cease to exist. This city itself will be thrown open to the tread of strange nations! We warn you!"

Suddenly they permitted the passage of the serpent through the temple. They washed the dark stains from the floors in gloom and execration. But that night, in the darkness of their inner sanctuary, they planned a holy scheme of vengeance.

The serpent was viewed by all the people. Stretched along the marble pavement, it measured eighteen feet in length, and its bulk was prodigious. They admired the wondrous courage of its slayers, but they grew silent in the presence of the priests. This creature was holy: the symbol of the wisdom of their god; the guard of the temple treasures. More than one gazed upon the white cacique as upon the

object of some near and mysterious doom. John was informed of the anger of the priests by Prince Zan. He was troubled. He spoke to his father.

"A struggle with these keepers of the false gods is probably inevitable, and probably near at hand. Let it come. I am not their natural ruler, yet their people are as children in my hands, and I will at least lead them away from the worship of images of stone. Still I am sorry to have offended the priests. But out upon them! They would have preferred little Xia to be devoured by that monster, rather than that we should have slain him!"

"Move cautiously," said his father; "you are in a bad spot. Appease them if you can. Why not prepare the skin of the serpent, and give it to them as a peace offering?"

John thought well of this. It was the labor of days, but at last the great serpent was skinned and preserved, and so well prepared that he looked as though yet alive. Even his eyes shone like the terrible eyes of life. The priests received the gift in silence, yet with evident awe and astonishment; and they set the gigantic creature up under its great namesake in stone, in the inner court.

Xia had recovered so rapidly that she witnessed the installation of the stuffed serpent in the temple. She smiled but faintly at the ceremonies. "It will please the priests," said she, "but is it not foolish to burn incense before a creature that is so dead? Teach my people, oh, my brother, about the one true God of whom you speak to me!"

The young New Englander turned his eyes away from her gentle gaze. He took her hand in his, but he did not speak. He was counting the cost.

One evening about sunset a trumpet-blast from the sentinel at the eastern gate, who ceaselessly paced the battlements, on the watch for friend or foe, called the people into the royal avenue. Tom as chief of the troops hastened to the sentry-box, and from his elevated station looked out over the valley.



A "WALKING-STICK."

A solitary footman was crossing the fields. It was dusk when he reached the drawbridge, and, recognized as one of the white cacique's body-guard, the ponderous gates revolved and let him inside the walls.

"I return from the hunt," he said simply.

The Itzaes who had received him greeted him warmly.

"Yes; a long hunt," said Tom, the war-chief, with



THE RETURN OF THE COURIER.

a smile, and forthwith took him to John, while the populace dispersed.

It was one of the couriers who had gone out with the message to Cozumel a month before. He was way-worn, and he limped from a wound in the leg; his bow was broken, his quiver empty, and his shield nearly split in twain.

John looked at him pityingly. "Your companion?" asked he.

He shook his head. In a few words he told the story of the enterprise. The ruler of the Mayas had tried to prevent them from crossing his territory; but through the aid of Christobal, secretly, they had reached Tuloom. There they found a canoe, and finally reached the island of Cozumel. There, too, they ran a death risk, the mate and Don Pedro taking them for spies from the mainland, and warning them back from the shore with rifles. They held up their letters in despair, and that saved them. The overjoyed

men on the island kept them a week. When well rested they were carried to the mainland in the long-boat, and left with many blessings and cautions to begin the perilous journey back to the Itza valley.

The Mayas this time detained them forcibly, and confined them in wooden cages. The fourth night this messenger made his escape. He worked desperately to free his comrade in the other cage, and as dawn broke in the east they both crept out towards the village borders. But the escape was discovered, pursuit made, and his fellow messenger was surrounded, struck down, and borne away. The broken bow and battered shield were evidence that he who had escaped had done so only after a fierce struggle.

The Indian told his story simply. Something yet troubled him more than his wound; more than the loss of his comrade. "My master," said he in a broken voice, "my companion had the letters from your friends. I have not one."

This was terrible news. Their hopes went out. But they determined to rescue the man who had the message. Proclaiming that one of the cacique's own body-guard was held prisoner by the Mayas, war-chief Tom dispatched men ordering the Maya chief at once to set the captive at liberty or the Itzae nation would march upon his territory.

This done, John, trembling a little at the bold step, turned his attention to the defences of the city. It was possible the Mayas would not wait for attack, but march upon them. Without exciting too greatly the fears of the simple Itzaes, he urged each man to plant every available foot of their gardens with corn and beans. Rooms in the temple and academy were set apart as storehouse and granary, and a portion of the crops already ripe, as it was brought in from the valley surrounding the walls, was stored for the general use should need arise. In the pure, dry atmosphere of this region, these stores would keep for years. The joyous Itzaes were delighted with the prudent fore-

thought of their ruler in preparing for a possible season of drought, or of great rains, for the older ones could recall more than one period of starvation, when many of their number had perished.



RESPLENDENT TROGANS.

An attack from the Mayas was not generally considered or discussed. Every man worked diligently and cheerfully.

John often contemplated the scene with a yearning in his heart which disclosed itself in tears. Would that he could forever isolate the shining city and its peaceful people from the eye and step of civilization!

The four square miles of territory enclosed by the four great walls was one vast garden dotted with pleasant abodes. About a thousand families occupied these peaceful dwellings. They constituted one great family, presided over by a royal family—an Arcadian kingdom. Harmony and love prevailed, because the thirst for power and the greed for gain were alike unknown here. The priesthood was the only internal element to be feared. Outside the mighty walls, in the moat, all the kinds of water-fowl peculiar to Yucatan sported in the water and built their nests in the rushes that lined the banks. Except the few that had been shot by John for specimens for the museum, they had remained unharmed for centuries. In case of siege, they would constitute a welcome addition to the food within the walls. It is true they had no cows, horses, swine, sheep or goats. But fowl they had in great numbers, and wild turkeys abounded, besides a curious native bird somewhat resembling a turkey, called the Hocco. This bird is about half the size of the turkey, and known by the Spanish name, *Faisan*, or pheasant. Its plumage is very glossy and it has a curious crown of feathers. Its flesh is very delicate, and much superior to chicken. It flocked the mountains and sometimes came down into the gardens of Itzamutul.

The material resources of the city were ample for a year's siege. More fortunate than the Aztecs of Mexico, whose supply of water, conducted by aqueducts to their capital, was cut off during the siege, the Itzaes obtained theirs from a source within the walls—from *beneath* the city; from the cavernous, coral rock underlying the whole peninsula of Yucatan. John had found that the Itzaes believed that the great treasure-cave where the serpent was destroyed extended from their city to the sea, a distance of thirty leagues. This he doubted, but still he had not explored the passage that certainly existed, leading off to unknown distances. Pure water they obtained by descending to a natural well near the space allotted as a market-place. He was aware of the very singular fact that

there are no rivers in Yucatan, or very few that flow above the surface, but that nearly all flow underground. They come from no one knows where, and run no one knows whither! Now and then they break out into one of these immense caverns, and the people living in Yucatan draw all their water from these caves. These are called Cenotes, or "water caves." The water is always pure and cool, always of the same depth, and always of the same temperature.

It had been a favorite morning recreation with both himself and Tom to watch the Itza girls wend their way towards the great Cenote. One after another they would pass with large urn-shaped jars poised on their heads, chatting and laughing. All at once they would disappear, as though swallowed up by the earth, into a passage winding downwards. This led into an immense chamber, the roof of which was supported by stalagmitic pillars. Passing in beyond they crossed a deep and black chasm, walking firmly upon a single log, and descended a ladder of slender poles, finally reaching the pool. In this way, for hundreds and hundreds of years, had the Itza maidens and matrons obtained water for household use.

It was one evening after having incited everybody to do his best to put the city in a well-provisioned condition, that John was chatting with his friends in the palace court. "Look!" he said, "our seldom-seen friends, the priests!"

The six keepers of the Sacred Fire came in, and paused before him. They speedily dispatched their errand. They had found their god greatly incensed at the slaying of the Treasure Serpent, and only partly propitiated by the offering of the Holy Skin. Another thing there remained to do. The mighty young cacique possessed the gift of bringing to the semblance of life the birds he shot in the air and trees. If he would exercise his art upon the Holy Bird of the tribe, the sacred Quetzal, that it might stand forever before their god, beside the Holy Serpent-skin, then would he smile once more upon the nation, and the atonement be sufficient for the sacrilege of slaughter. Then, indeed, they would have an ever-present emblem: Quetzal, the bird of green and golden plumage; Coatl, the sacred serpent,—Quetzal-coatl, the mightiest being of their mythology. Thus might evil be turned into positive blessing.

John smilingly promised: "Bring me the bird; I will prepare it with great care for the temple."

The priests bowed low: "Great king, most royal

cacique of Itzamutul, that bird liveth in the mighty forests of Peten, near the lake of the Sacred Tapir, five days' journey hence. If thou wilt consent to go with these, thy servants, we will accompany thee."

"I will go, my brothers. To-morrow we will start at daylight."

The sombre-garbed priests bowed once more, and withdrew. As they shuffled through the corridor, Zan and Xia came tripping in to bid their friends good-

She answered swiftly, with :

"Listen to me, and you, my brother, listen. Dost remember the legend of our ancestors — that they had two gods until their tribes were united? One was he of the Aztecs, one was he of the Itzaes. The Aztecs were fierce and cruel; they sacrificed to their god the lives of men and children. It was many years before our ancestors could destroy this wicked worship, and replace it with the true one, with its



"NOW, OH QUETZALCOATL, THOU ART ABOUT TO BE AVENGED!"

night, for it was an Itza custom to say to one another, "May the gods bless thy rest!"

"What wanted the priests?" asked Xia, climbing to John's knee.

"That I go with them to-morrow, to seek the Quetzal, my lady sovereign."

She could not hide her sudden terror.

"Ah, no! You must not do that. You do not know the chief man of the priests, Balam-helam. He has that in his heart that would cause him to kill thee."

"What, my little Itza queen, are you afraid of your own priests?"

offerings of flowers and fruit, instead of blood. Hast never heard of the victim that the Aztecs yearly offered to their idols? They chose the fairest and most god-like of their young men, and for a twelve-month honored him above all others in the land. As the allotted time drew to a close they decked him with flowers, and carried him through the streets on their shoulders, and all saluted him as a king. Then they led him to their temple, built upon a great pyramid of stone — there is one, my father told us, at Uxmal. There, in sight of all the people, they stretched him upon a great flat stone. The high priest came, and with his knife of sharpest flint cut

open his noble breast and tore from it the innocent heart as an offering to their idol. Here, even in this city, those wicked Aztec priests used thus to kill victims, until my people crushed it out — this awful worship of blood.

"Now, what is it I would say to you? This!" — she pressed her lips to John's right ear and whispered — "Balam-helam, our high priest, is the distant son of one of those man-slayers. When I look at him I think he would restore the ancient worship."

Our brave New Englander was startled as the possible perfidy of the priests was shown to him. But he had given his royal word; not the fear of all the priests of the peninsula should make him break it.

Xia on her couch in the farther apartment could not sleep; through the night she lay tossing feverishly. At dawn she took her station where she could watch the departure of the hunting party: Cacique John, his chief Tom, the two pages, and four priests.

The high priest had insisted that no men-of-war should accompany them, and John had yielded, relying upon his superior weapons to give him the advantage in case of need. He carried over his shoulder his light bird-gun, well charged with shot, and his revolver was in his belt. Parting from his father whom he left in charge of affairs, he sought the royal children, but they were not to be found.

It was thought ten days would complete the journey.

The first night they camped in the forest. Each party kept by itself. The pages John knew were loyal. But what were they? Young lads with no weapons but their forest-knives. Under pretence of possible attack from the Caribs, John placed one of the four on watch throughout the night; each had his three hours' vigil. They were unavowed four against four, John felt. But, standing on the defensive, they must seem wholly unsuspecting.

Four days and nights passed. Their way led through vast and luxuriant forests, where the trees climbed to the clouds, carrying up circling draperies of vines. Birds so strange and beautiful that the young naturalist could scarcely refrain from stopping to shoot them, filled this great wood. Quadrupeds, so rare in museums that they would have brought fabulous prices, crossed their path without provoking a shot. One night they were disturbed by those weird insects, the "walking-sticks," whose slender green bodies looked like animated twigs. Almost as curious were the leaf-insects.

One morning they saw a beautifully mottled cane

lying in their path. Tom stooped to pick it up, but one of the pages caught him by the arm. What was his surprise to find this object to be a living and venomous viper, the bite of which was sure and sudden death.

The evening of the fifth day saw them in the forest of Tikal. It was a weird sight, this forest, for it was filled with ruins of temples, pyramids, and great stone idols; and altars rose up everywhere. Many hundred years before, it must have been the site of a city; now, wild beasts lurked behind its altars, and birds, serpents and monkeys inhabited the abandoned rooms of the crumbling structures.

They cleared a room of one building of its rubbish and there encamped. That night it was John's watch for the three hours preceding dawn, and afterward he strolled away seeking the Quetzal. He was anxious to terminate this suspense and he resolved to secure the birds that very day and begin the return march the next morning.

By and by, in the distance, he heard a faint cry. It came nearer and nearer: *Cou-rou-cou, cou-rou-cou!* Presently he heard it over his head in a tall spiny palm. Gazing intently he at last saw a golden-green bird, with a long glittering tail, crouched low upon a palm rib. At once he raised his gun and fired. The royal beauty fell at his feet, so glorious in its splendor of plumage that he was lost in admiration and amazement. He raised it from the ground almost reverently.

An exclamation startled him. He turned to see Tom, the pages, the priests. The report of the gun had roused them all.

He joyfully held out his prize to the high priest. Balam-helam moved away, his brow darkening. His companions followed him.

John was surprised. He stood pondering.

"It is *not* what they wanted," he said at last, to Tom. Drawing him aside he hastily related the suspicions of the little princess. "But," concluded he, "we are a match for them. I consider myself absolved from my promises. I have the Quetzal. We will stay here to-day, secure what specimens we can, for the Institution, then make all haste to-morrow to return."

Balam-helam meantime gathered his three followers in the ruins of a temple near by. "He has done it," he hissed between his teeth. "He has killed the bird beloved of our deity. I have made sure of the vengeance of our gods. Having also slain the serpent,

he hath incurred the twofold wrath. They both must die! We will have a noble sacrifice, as of old did our fathers."

All that day Balam-helam searched the forest, beneath the dampest ferns and rankest vegetation. Digging up the roots of two plants, he returned late in the afternoon to camp.

"To-night, at the evening repast," said he to the priests, "I will place *this* root in the soup. It has the power of causing a deep stupor to seize those who eat of it. But this other root — note its different shape — will prevent the effects of the first, if eaten soon after. See you my meaning? We have the antidote, the strangers have it not. When sleep has seized them, we will call upon our gods to behold the feasts of old spread before them."

Grimly at the evening meal the priests regarded the young cacique and his chief. They ate heartily them-

selves, and no suspicion could have been awakened. At midnight, even the watch slept. There was no need of haste and stealth. Balam-helam laughed aloud, spurning the hated cacique with his foot.

"Drag them to the altar!" he cried in evil glee.

Among the near palms, a giant stone towered above a square block of marble, both hideously sculptured. Upon the marble they stretched the doomed young strangers. The high priest drew the sacrificial knife.

"Now, oh, Quetzalcoatī, thou art about to be avenged! Let the blood of these strangers atone for the neglect of the Itza nation these long years."

He paused transfixed, his hand at the throat of the young cacique, his knife half-raised. John had awakened from his stupor; his clear eyes were uplifted, gazing straight into the baleful orbs above him. For a moment Balam-helam shrank abashed.

BACK INTO THE WILDERNESS.

CHAPTER VI.



"HAT! falter!" exclaimed one of the under priests; "give me the knife of sacrifice!"

Balam-helam recovered himself.

"Back to thy place! I alone am of

Aztec blood; I alone am of the ancient priesthood; I alone may appease Quetzalcoatl in his wrath!" The fires of frenzy were relighted in his eyes. A cry of exultation and hate broke from his lips as he raised the sacrificial knife. A smile followed as he saw John in vain trying to move in the nightmare of the drug; a great pallor succeeded the smile as he heard a rush through the vine-thicket behind the altar. It was all one flash of action. One instant a spear-point riveted his eye, the next it had pierced his heart.

The flash of the weapon, the sharp cries, seemed to release John from the deadly stupor. As the high priest fell he struggled to rise, and then his consciousness deserted him again, or he had but a vague sense of being the centre of a group of struggling men. One of the priests hurled a knife at his throat—but still he lived, though still he could not rise—then a spear glittered across his eyes, another and another leaped past like swift lightnings, and after that there was a rush of many feet—a confused and wild flight and pursuit; the forest echoed with terrible cries. Was it a dream? Was he lying in the old moonlit chamber, in the New England farmhouse, asleep and dreaming, and this tropic forest of sculptured altars and hideous idols, this fray of armed Indians, but a fancy born in his sleep of his evening's reading of the old wizard book? If Joe would only speak to him and rouse him!

But no, it was not a dream! A soft, warm, dusky arm was thrown around John's neck; soft kisses were pressed upon his face; soft Itza murmurs were in his ear: "Do not lie here, brother! You are free. Come with me, brother!"

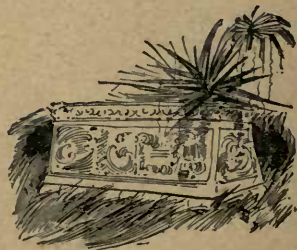
John's eyes searched wistfully the sweet, familiar face. He raised himself, and took the child beside him. A shiver ran over him as he met the grinning gaze of a huge idol in the moonlight thicket. "My little Xia, how came you here?"

But here, trooping back, came other familiar faces: his own guardsmen with their spears and shields; Prince Zan too. He turned. Tom was at his side, stretched on the broad stone altar, lying in a profound sleep.

It was the work of a half-hour to thoroughly rouse him, as he had eaten heartily of the drugged soup. Only the most vigorous pounding, shaking, dragging about and drenching availed.

Wet and cold, Tom was thoroughly cross and unreasonable, and it was some time before he realized the strange peril in which he had been involved. The two pages were also to be awakened, and it was dawn before they reached the temple where they had camped.

Then our New Englanders learned the secret of their rescue. It was sweet little heroic Xia who told the story. She and Zan had risen like young sovereigns, and summoned the bodyguard, and succeeded in exciting their deepest fears, and then they set forth on the rescue, and had given themselves no rest, except in the darkest hours of night. They had reached the forest of the sacred ruins not an hour too soon. Both the children gazed on them with the



ALTAR AMONG THE SACRED RUINS.

tenderest love in their looks. John's own eyes filled with tears. Their feet were cut, their faces torn by thorns, their garments in tatters. John almost wept aloud when he saw the gashes in Xia's tender hands and arms. "My own brother could not have done more," said he to himself. "Henceforth they are to me as my own."

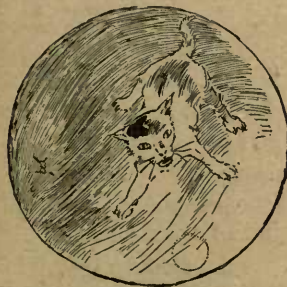
The guardsmen saw and listened in silence. They were young men, born and trained to fight; they rarely spoke. They received John's praises with silent gratification. The slaying of the priests had been to them but as an incident of war.

Feeling all danger past, John and Tom gave one day to the hunt of the Quetzal.

This bird, aside from its sacred character among the Indians, is a rare and beautiful bird; a royal creature. It is known to naturalists as the Resplendent Trogon — *Trogon resplendens*. In South America its long tail feathers were worn by the daughters of the caciques. In Mexico, in the time of the Aztec kingdom, only the emperor was allowed to use them. Their plumage is most glorious; like emerald frosted with gold. They were said to be so proud of their long and beautiful tails that they build their nests with two openings, entering at one side, leaving at the other. The family to which they belong, the *trogonidae*, is found only in the Tropics. We of the North never see a living trogon unless we go South and penetrate the tropic forests. It cannot endure confinement. Like the humming bird, it lives on food that man cannot supply to it in captivity. Six of these magnificent birds were taken back to the city and added to the treasures the young men had accumulated for the museum at Washington.

The journey back was slow. Xia and her brother were carried in a litter, their wounds and lameness had become so serious. The Indians would have constructed a *litera* for Tom and John, and have borne

them on their shoulders, but this the young men would not allow. The priests, by John's orders, had been reverently buried at the foot of the great altar which they had sought to stain once more with the old Aztec sacrifice.



A TOSSED-UP CAT.

The Itza people received without much concern the news from the mountains. They had long turned to the young white men for guidance, for new ideas, and for just decisions. Besides, there were still two priests to conduct the temple worship; men of mild bearing, whom Balam-helam had not taken into his secret plans; men who listened with interest whenever John read in Itza from the Bible — men who by

nature loved the truth. For the time, universal peace and good-will brooded over the ancient capital of Itzamna.

But John, realizing his great influence and his great opportunity, hesitated sometimes in his work of enlightenment. He knew that the war-like Mayas looked upon the city as the Mecca of the nation. Here were conserved their own ancient gods; here were the great temples of their religion. The Itzaes, Christianized, would at once be regarded as a tribe of enemies — worse, traitors. Dare he take upon his young shoulders the responsibilities of such great changes? He feared, as matters stood even now, that the Mayas would march against the city as soon as they heard of the death of the priests, even if not incited to do so by the defiant challenge regarding the captive messenger. He congratulated himself that the city was so well prepared to withstand a siege. Farther into the future, even the near future, John dared not look; if he did, a life far different from any he had ever planned confronted him — even beckoned to him with imperious finger.

One day messengers arrived from the Sublevados; not their own cousins, but two Mayas. However, they bore the detained letters from Cozumel. They explained that the Itza cousins were too fatigued to attempt the return trip without rest, even as they, too, must tarry for refreshment in Itzamna, a few days.

At ease regarding any immediate enmity of the Mayas, our young cacique and his friends gave themselves up to the joy of at last hearing from the mate and Don Pedro. Cozumel seemed to them the outside world. Nearly six months had elapsed since the boys had sailed from the island. For half a year they had been buried in this wondrous wilderness without any tidings of the comrades from whom they had been so rudely separated at Tuloom. With hearts throbbing with anxiety, they broke the seals of the two letters. Thus ran the mate's:

COZUMEL, *Sometime in May.*

MY HEARTIES:

There ain't words that'll tell how glad Don Pedro and me was to get your letters by the *last mail*. But it wa'n't no news to me that you and Tom had found the Silver City. I said to Don Pedro, says I, after we'd got clear of them fiends at Tuloom, 'somehow, I don't have no fears for them two boys; they're like cats, they be; you may toss 'em high as you're mind to, and they'll always come down on their feet!' says I. We had a long consultation about the chances of your being sacrificed by the savages, an' we'd felt pretty bad, for we knew 'twas no use a-follerin' on into a forest full of 'em except that I had that innard faith in your luck. 'Depend on it,'

says I, to Don Pedro, says I, 'them boys is all right. If they ain't jest gone and took the through train for that Silver City,' says I, 'it ain't Jack North that's heading the percession,' says I, 'so the best we can do is to wait and keep a spring on our cable, so that we can light out after 'em at a minute's warning,' says I.



VASES IN THE TEMPLE
CAVES.

Now, I'll let you know how we've planned to reach you.

If the map of Yucatan that we've got is good for anything, there is a deep bay exactly opposite that Indian capital, Chan Santa Cruz, where you said you frightened 'em

so by shooting the owl, and this bay is called Ascension, and lays just about a hundred miles sou'-sou'west of Cozumel, and as near as we can cakelate, about the same distance nor'-nor'east of that air city you was so anxious to git into, and now we guess you are just as anxious to get out of.

Here is the case as I put it to Don Pedro: Says I, 'if the boys can contrive to git over their hundred miles to the coast,' says I, 'ain't it fair to presume that we can make a run of a hundred more, and meet 'em half way?' says I. So the case stands about this way: There's an island at the bottom of the bay, called *Isla de los pajaros*, or the Bird Island. Now we intend to land on Bird Island about the last week in June. The question is, Can you jine us there? There ain't but two things against it, fust, the chance that these messengers will give our scheme away to the cacique of the Sublevados. Second, there is your gitting out of the city, as you say no strangers are ever allowed to git out. But if you can't manage this, you ain't what I take you for! So I'll leave it that we meet the last week in June. Don Pedro and me will take along our turkle nets, and plenty of



WEAPONS.

ammunition, and will cruise about the bay for a month on the lookout for you, unless the savages run us off. And speaking of *turkle*—perhaps we ain't got the pootiest lot of *turkle shell* man ever set his eyes on. Don Pedro and me ain't been loafing any, I tell you. Morning and night we worked, a-turkle ketching and fishing for pearl oysters. You two boys ain't going to want for nothing as long as we live! I s'pose you'll come out of the wilderness without any more to your name than a picked chicken, but we've got enough for the whole of us, not leaving out your father. And that didn't supprise me either, your finding of him down there. Following out that *clue* we got of the shark, I said to Don Pedro, says I, 'that boy'll foller it out; he ain't much on the sea,' says I—in fact, he's a regular Jonah—but soon's he's set foot on land,' says I, 'he's in his native element,' says I. JASN W. WALKER.

Formerly mate of the *Dappled Diver*, and now fust lieutenant in the service of his Majesty, Don Pedro Pinto, King of the Cozumel Island.

J. W. W.

Don Pedro's letter, after the good cheer of the mate's, entertained them greatly:

ISLAND OF COZUMEL.

MI LITTLE HIJO:

What has you so long keep you? *Esta cerca ahora 6 meses* we no have not hear to you. *Parece los salvajes* have eat you—make ze soup of you. So you have find *la Ciudad de Plata, tan grande, tan magnifico!* How much you like ze peepile? *Los Indios de Itzae son muy buenos, tienen la cortesía de sus antepasados, aunque tienen el culto de Quetzalcoatl.* Ze mait el Señor Walker, *esta mi buen amigo; tien emucho la simpatia de la corazon*—his hart, eet is right. *Amigo mio, tenemos muchos de la tortugas, muchos! muchos! panusted y para el Señor Tom Cuando nosotros volvermos aqui tendremos mucho de la plata, para usted para su padre, y pava el señor Tom.* To do el mundo vill have much *dinero* ayvery body, he vill have ze rico. *Siento mucho que ustedes, have ze bad loock. Espere uptel nosotros a la isla de los pajaros en mes: ve will be zare vizout ze fail in el long bote A Dios! temo borrar lo que escribo con les legrimas que se escapan de mis ojos. Abrago a vd querido amigo y le suplico trasmila, mis afectos a su afreciable familia. Se repite de vd, etc.* Ze mait he says zis ees ze first-class Eangliesh.

PEDRO PINTO.

"Well," said the young cacique, with averted eyes and grave face, "such of the party as wish to go North will avail themselves of this offer of conveyance." He spoke in a light tone, but his voice trembled, for in this short speech he purposed to announce his determination to remain in the Silver City.

His father's face was full of grieved surprise. Tom bounded from his seat, and faced John like an astonished exclamation point. But argument and entreaty failed to move him. It was no sudden determination, after all, he said, but a foregone conclusion. "It would," he said, "be a heartless and unmanly act to abandon his people, and leave them without a ruler, at least during the period of Prince Zan's minority." He had accepted from the dying cacique the guardianship of his two children; he had assumed the caciqueship as a sacred trust until the rightful ruler was of age. Before the Itza people, and in the sight of God, he was under obligations to remain. "I have no more right," he said, "to break my faith with an Indian than with a white man. Meanwhile," he went on, "I shall devote my leisure to deciphering the hieroglyphics on the temple walls, and in the bark books of the *Memes*. If I succeed, a thousand years of history will be added to the triumphs of civilization in America."

His father brought up considerations of home and



VASE AND CLAY FIGURES.

country, of mother and brother, but it was plain to see that John had settled all these questions with himself long before. "I send them you instead, dear father, for the present," he said; "mother will be thankful that I dreamed my 'romantic dream,' as she used to call it, since it was the means of your rescue and return, father. Surely I can spare half a dozen years of my young manhood for these important duties of others."

There was no need now of secret p'ans, and of calculations upon the Indian consternation in the



THE LAST VIEW OF THE SILVER CITY.

presence of an eclipse. Even the traditional custom, to let no stranger depart who once had entered the Silver City, would give way before the command of the wise young cacique, especially were it seconded by the wishes of the royal children. Therefore it was soon understood, though much to the general grief, that sometime in June the war chief Tom, and the cacique's father, were to depart for the land of the Snow King. The white cacique was to remain.

The preparations made for departure were very simple. There was little to take away except the art treasures discovered in the temple caverns. These

were packed in bags of native hemp. There were thirty-three each; a good backload for an Indian. These Indians, with an armed escort, were to go in night-journeys, with Tom and Captain North, to Ascension Bay, to meet the mate and Don Pedro. This measure was also publicly explained. The Itzaes fully understood that their sacred treasures were to be disposed of to the museums of Europe and America, and that the proceeds were to be divided afterwards—one half of the whole amount to be set aside for the royal children and their descendants, the remainder to be equally divided among Tom and Captain North as John's representative.

The large amount of Spanish gold supposed to exist in the well was to remain there, since it could be used in time of need in the peninsula, for the benefit of the tribe.

It was now but two nights before the departure of the party for Ascension Bay. The city had retired to rest, but there might have been seen a strange sight for Itzamutul after dark. The eastern gate was ajar, and, the heavy blocks of marble slowly unclosing, a black body of armed men came pushing softly through, and met by the Mayas who had brought the Cozumel letters moved silently up between the mighty statues of the royal avenues.

The sentinels at the eastern gate had easily been overpowered by the couriers—spies of the Mayas' chief—and the Mayas were admitted without noise.

"Two nights later—and too late!" said the couriers eagerly. "The Lords of the Air depart on the day but one, save the great magician, he of the Thunder Weapon." Silently, they proceeded toward the palace. The picked men entered the silver door stealthily. When they emerged the three white men, gagged and bound, were led in their midst.

They were taken before the Mayas' chief.

"The ones!" he growled, looking upon them with a countenance of wrath. He turned to the men who had dragged them from their hammocks. "Bring their sandals and their raiment, not their weapons! We march at once to the hills."

He frowned upon the pantomime of John's entreaty. No farewells were to be taken of the Prince and Princess.

"The Itzaes know not of my coming," said he. "They will believe ye have been transported to that region in the air whence ye came to our country. It is well."

Silently as they had entered, the Mayas' host had

departed through the marble gates and over the drawbridge. The sentinels, bound and blindfolded, knew not who had opened the gates, nor knew they who closed them. The three prisoners, blindfolded, were placed in literas, and on the shoulders of their captors were hurried over the beautiful valley to the hills. As they reached the great forest the chief halted his band and bade them remove the bandages.

"Look," he said, "your last upon the city ye would have thrown into rebellion! Never more shall ye behold its silver walls! It is again buried, and forever, from the eyes of the white man."

A bitter cry burst from John's lips. He thought of the tender lives in that city of peace left perhaps to be the prey of their fiercer brothers, the Mayas. John turned an imploring look upon the cacique. He divined its meaning. His stern lips wreathed with a haughty smile. "Waste no pity," he sneered. "We have performed our task. We have saved our gods, our treasures, our holy worship, from your grasp. We again hide our beautiful city from the sight of the world. And as Itza and Maya lived in peace before you came, so will we continue. Ye it is who would have brought enmity between us!"

Bathed in the light of the moon, the white walls glistened with a pure and silvery radiance as the host entered the wood, and John had seen the last of the Silver City.

And now the Mayas' chief came to John's side. Once more he halted his host. "Think not I will spare thee, young wizard, now that I have thee without thy magic weapons," said he. "If I do not sacrifice ye to our outraged god, whose high priest ye have slain, before the sun rises in the east, may I loose my own head! One hour—no longer—ye may live. Now what have ye to say?"

It seemed to devolve upon John, the young wizard, to answer.

John felt his father's eyes and Tom's upon his face. He felt that upon his wisdom their lives too depended. He threw his robe about him with a haughty indifference.

"Chief of the Mayas, dost forget you address a chieftain of the God of the Air? My weapons are not visible to eyes like thine. Will you have a sign from my all-powerful master of what may befall if you harm us? Behold, then, I warn you, that unless you grant me free passages to the sea, I will call for a sign of near vengeance to appear in the heavens. See ye yonder moon, sailing joyously up the eastern sky?

To-morrow night at this very hour she shall suddenly frown upon you and depart for a season into the council chamber of the wrath of darkness."

He spoke in Itza, and all the host heard and understood. The sentiment of awe and dread during the time of an eclipse is universal among the savages of the globe. Their panic was visible. Evidently they doubted not the power of the young wizard to perform what he had boasted. The chief himself was deeply disturbed. He drew back from his captives, but John quietly followed him with his calm gaze. He spoke at last:

"If it befall as thou boastest, thou and thy friends shall depart, and we will escort thee to the sea. But if it come not to pass to-morrow night at this hour, we will wipe thee and thy mischief forever from our land and our thoughts."

It cannot be said that the coming event was awaited by the little band of captives without anxiety. What if there were an error of calculation in their almanac which predicted the eclipse?

They marched all that day, and at night encamped full forty miles from the starting point. The hour of the eclipse approached. The prisoners were not allowed to converse, but each could see that his comrades were anxious, — depressed.

For an hour the attention of the Mayas had been directed toward the east, and when the moon rose proudly to view undimmed by a cloud, they sent up a deafening shout of exultation. They would have seized the false prophet there and then, but he waved them back. "Wait! two more hours yet remain!"

They fell back. They waited in suspense not greater than that which settled around the throbbing hearts of their prisoners.

Two hours passed. And then, lo! with almost miraculous steadiness of movement even to John, a black shadow began to creep over the surface of the moon. It settled there; only a narrow rim appeared, surrounding the great black disk.

The Mayas, with low cries, fell on their faces. The chief grovelled forward to John's feet. He implored the pardon of the captives. "And remove, oh, great magician, that serpent that is devouring the fair and beautiful moon! We are thy slaves, command us! Believe us, we ourselves will conduct ye to the coast."

It was surely a legitimate triumph of science over ignorance. The young New Englander bowed his head to the All-wise who had given him his opportunities of knowledge.

"Rise," he exclaimed; "the serpent departs. Only see, now, that ye fulfil your promises."

The warriors gazed upward with awe. The sky was clear. Emerging, the glorious luminary moved on her heavenly course as serenely as before.

A glad shout arose. Reverently, one by one, the throng kissed the feet of their mighty captives. They were eager to move coastward, eager for the departure forever from these mysterious beings.

Two nights and days they journeyed. They were loaded with favors, and treated with homage. They

in Itza. "The moon shall light you night by night till the sun come."

They lay in their literas and awaited the dawn. They knew the cautious mate would never approach the shore by moonlight.

The first streak of daylight saw Tom running up and down the sands. "Ahoy! Ship ahoy!" he was shouting at the top of his voice.

"Ahoy yourself! Ahoy!" came back in trumpet tones.

In another moment a canoe put out from the long-



THE TRIUMPH OF SCIENCE.

had no fears of treachery, unarmed though they were. The third night, an hour after sunset, a cool breeze touched their cheeks—a breeze from the sea! At midnight the band filed out of the forest upon the sand beach at the head of Ascension Bay. Here the Mayas left them. As the host turned again into the forest, the chief pointed eastward. In the pathway of the moon lay a black object. It was Don Pedro's long-boat. In the gladness of feeling himself reunited with the great world, John waved the Mayas' chief a cordial adieu. "A safe journey!" he cried

boat, and ten minutes later Mate Walker stood on the beach.

But no pen can report that meeting. Even John's two fathers, Captain North and Don Pedro, met like old friends, and the Spaniard's joy over his "son" was touching.

They at once hurried aboard the boat, for, as the mate remarked, "The Indians might change their minds come daylight."

Two days were consumed on the run along coast to Cozumel, but they were two days of sunny hilarity

and wonderful yarns. As Tom said, "*The Arabian Nights* were nowhar' alongside 'of life in the Silver City."

John alone was grave. He thought constantly of the children of the cacique, whom he had loved so dearly; of the peaceful kingdom that had been wrested from his rule; of the tempting historical labors in the temple.

"Never mind," said the mate. "You've got all your life before you yit, and you may yit translate them works of the wise men yit."

"We'll go back any time he says so," said Tom eagerly. "Just let me breathe a whisper of them gold and silver treasures in the well, and them glittering dishes we packed up only to leave behind us, and I could raise an army of men up home that would sweep the whole country of Yucatan like a new broom, an' not leave a dish or a doubloon, or a bird or a beast; for its borne in on me that our young king of Itzamna here, is a-mourning for his gorgeous birds about as much as anything — had mor'n two hundred kinds of 'em, he had!"

"The young king of Itzamna" smiled but faintly. He was thinking of the heartsick surprise of the two royal children when they woke to find him gone — gone without a word, without a sign of either explanation or farewell, without a hint of return. It was intolerable. "It cannot, it shall not be forever!" he said to himself again and again.

There was something in the manner of the mate and Don Pedro that seemed to imply that they had a great surprise in store.

But the mystery remained unsolved until they reached the shore of Cozumel and turned into the channel that led to the lake, where John had been discovered by Don Pedro after the wreck.

It was about sunset, and the golden rays lingered upon the tree-tops; as they struck sail and rowed up towards the cabin, they lighted up, also, something besides — a familiar object. The boys were thrilled with an intense excitement, for there lay quietly at her moorings, with masts set and rigging taut, the beautiful shape of the *Dappled Diver*!

"Thought ye'd be suprised," chuckled the mate, while Don Pedro looked on with smiling eyes, and stroked his long gray beard.

"Oh, the Don and me ain't been doin' nothin' all the time you was lost," said the mate. "There came a westerly wind one day, and I says to Don Pedro, says I, 'If this wind blows pooty stiddy from that

quarter long,' says I, 'it may start the *Diver* off the reef.' And so we took the long-boat and went round to her, and lo and behold, she had slid into deep water, an' would a-drifted off, if it hadn't a-been for them anchors we'd put out when we left her. Well, we jest went to work an' rigged a jury-mast, an' in a week we had worked her around into the lake where you see her now. Ain't she a beauty!"

"But where'd you get masts and riggin'?" asked Tom.

"Oh, Don Pedro had plenty layin' raound, loose spars and timbers, an' a whole haouse full of ropes



THE "DAPPLED DIVER."

and blocks. It was a job to git 'em up, but we had time enough, and we done it at last. She ain't no longer a skewner, as yeu see, but more of a brigantine. We couldn't git big enough masts intew her. Jest step aboard and look at her."

"Neat as a man-of-war," was the verdict of the whole party.

"And ready tew sail ter-morrer!" added the mate. "Everything's aboard, even tew the gold which we buried in the tomb. Here's your cabin, John, an' you'll find what valooables you left in that

chist. You ain't seen it all, neither. Here's the afterhold full of turkle-shell, an' any quantity of turkle ile under the main hatch. The old *Diver's* tight as a cup; her cargo of shooks and staves ain't hurt a mite. Now do any of yew draw any inference from this?"

"That you'll sail back to Cuba, and finish the voyage," said John.

"Tew be sure!" added the mate. "And there we'll load with sugar, m'lasses, and then up sail for Selim; Don Pedro, he's goin' with us. He is, that's a fact; but he's made me promise tew come back an' spend another season a-turklin' with him. We'll spend a month or so at home, an' then come back here some time in November. P'raps we'll all come back, seein' 's how much there is left behind tew square up. P'raps you'll have another whack at that treasure in the city yet, an' see your leetle friends ag'in; eh, John?"

John's face lit up with something of its old fire.

"Mate, do you really think you'll come back here in November?"

"I don't think, I *know* it," answered he confidently.

"Do you really need me in sailing the vessel to Cuba? and can't you ship some hands to help you on the voyage home?"

"Of course we can; it ain't but four or five days' sail to Cuby."

"Then, with Don Pedro's permission, I am going to stay on this island till you return! You can provision me, and leave me a rifle and ammunition, and a boat. You know I want to study natural history here, for one thing."

Contrary to his expectations no strong opposition was offered by his companions to this romantic proposition.

"Jest as I expected," said the mate. "I told Don Pedro, says I, 'that boy ain't goin' tew be contented to go home,' says I; 'here he's lost his birds and things, and what's he got tew show for the money the perfesser lent him? Nothin',' says I; 'actooally nothin'.' Don Pedro, he says, says he, 'I'll give him money to pay back the perfesser,' says he, and he'd a-done it, tew. But I says, says I, 'you don't know John North,' says I; 'he works from a sense of duty, he does. He's sot his heart on gettin' a collection of birds, he has, and not all the powers that be is going to turn him away from it,' says I."

"No," said John, "they couldn't. I've set my heart on a specimen of every bird in Yucatan to take to Washington." But he said nothing of another plan on which his heart was still more strongly set: by some means to open communication with Christobal, the kind and powerful war-chief of the Mayas; that done, he believed he could once more find the path to his precious people in the Silver City.

With this hope beating high in his heart, while his comrades sailed away in the *Dappled Diver*, a week later, he watched them from the headland till out of sight, with a strange loneliness, perhaps, but not a pang of regret. And when they had rounded the southern point and stood off into the eastern channel, opposite the reef where the *Diver* had run ashore, they saw with their glasses his lone figure still walking the sands near the wrecking cabin.



THE LONE FIGURE ON THE SANDS.



MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES



CHRISTMAS MORNING WITH THE NEW DOLLS: "You heathen boy, I s'pose you never heard about Christmas, and the Star, and the Child in the Manger, and I will need to have Sunday School for you and the Mikado Baby every day all winter!"

MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES.

BY FRED A. OBER.

(Author of "The Silver City.")

CHAPTER I.

FAREWELL, COZUMEL.

BENEATH the golden roof-tree of a palm, on the sandy shore of Laguna Santa Cruz, lay stretched the figure of a youth within sound of the surf-beat of the blue and sparkling waters of the Caribbean Sea.

It is a land-locked lakelet — Laguna Santa Cruz — on the coast of Cozumel, an island lying east of the mysterious peninsula of Yucatan. Deep and sombre are the woods of Cozumel, containing within their secret depths the ruins of most ancient buildings, pyramids, and perhaps palaces — sole mementos of a people passed away. Spicy and fragrant are the gales that sweep over these forests and drift languidly across to the main land, laden with the sweets of a thousand blossoms, with the perfume of palms, and the honey-scent of frangipanni. For centuries have these honeyed breezes blown the odors of Cozumel over to the silent main, giving to this fair isle its name, "Cozumel, Island of Honey-bees."

The solitary palm that sheltered the motionless form from the sun waved its leaves in the afternoon breeze, sending a flickering play of shadow over the yellow sand beneath, and letting in, now and again, an ardent beam; but even the piercing shaft of Helios failed to move this sleeper on the shore. The cocoa-nuts above clashed noisily together, the dry flower-spathes rustled against the trunk, and the long branches of the palm swayed this way and that with the coming breath of evening; still no movement beneath. Even when a boat-keel grated upon the sand and there leaped out three half-naked men who advanced stealthily upon the slumberer, he stirred not. It seemed then that a quivering shock passed through trunk and branches of the palm, and that she essayed to lift her leaves and beat her stem; but the wind had wholly died away, and the sun was fast nearing the horizon; a great red disk in the amber sky. Well might the pitiful palm have shuddered with apprehension, noting what proceeded at her very feet; that the unresisting boy was bound with twisted cords of bark and borne to the boat; that the hut in which he had dwelt — standing in sight

at the edge of the forest—was swiftly searched, ransacked and then set on fire. As the flames crackled fiercely amongst the dry leaves that thatched the hut—plumes that had once greenly adorned her own coronet—Palma saw these wild-looking strangers load the boat with their plunder and push off into the lake.

The glowing disk in the West extinguished its fires in the Gulf of Mexico; paler grew the sky, swiftly drawing over its face the curtain of night, spangled with stars; and then the palm-tree was left alone, brooding above its silent lake, and watching the smoke of the burning hut as it rose upward and drifted over the forest.

Afloat on the heaving Caribbean Sea, the boat guided by a fierce-gesturing helmsman, took its course northwardly, after turning out of the inlet that connected with the lake, finally reaching a small vessel that lay in mid-channel. The sail was hoisted and the craft bore away to the north.

Not till then—not till their canoe had been fastened securely astern, and its contents distributed aboard the larger boat; the unresisting prisoner stretched out under the lee-rail, sheltered by a sail; and a steaming supper brought by the cook from the caboose—did the sailor speak.

“He sleeps well!” said the oldest of the trio, indicating by a nod the prisoner under the lee-rail. He was a sturdy weather-beaten sailor—the speaker—with coarse features, curling black hair, a grizzled beard, and eyes black as night, having in their keen twinkle a suggestion of evil deeds in their owner’s past.

“But well then, Antonio,” spoke out the next younger, who much resembled the old man in garb and feature, “what less could he do than sleep! did not Juanito whisper in his ear the sleep-song of the Mayas? Will he ever wake?”

Juanito was the youngest of the crew, a slender, graceful lad, clad in ragged shirt and trousers through various rents in which elbows and knees protruded. His skin was a beautiful golden-bronze in color, his cheeks flushed with the red of the mango; his eyes were of soft lustrous black. Grace of motion, fineness and nobility of feature distinguished him from his companions, as though he might have perhaps in him the spirit of the *conquistadores*—the conquerors—of his native Mexico.

“He will wake at dawn,” the lad answered carelessly; “that is sure enough. But do not you

dare loosen the cords till I have had a word with him, lest he do harm to some of us.”

The conversation was in rough Spanish. The three fishermen were Mexicans. They had come up from the eastern coast of Yucatan, whither they had gone to fish for turtle, and were now on their way back to the Laguna de Terminos, many days’ distant on the other shore of the peninsula.

“But how did you put *el señor extranjero* into slumber so lasting?” asked Manuel, regarding the lad with admiration.

“*Como?*—How? Trust Juanito when there is work that needs wits. It was this morning, early; *el solitario* was astir with the dawn; I watched him from the forest; he came out from his *jacal* and built a fire in front of it, placing over it the kettle in which he makes his chocolate. Then he went down to the shore, to his *canoá*, and before he came back I had been at the fire; I had lifted the cover of the chocolate, I had dropped into it the sweet gum.”

“Thou didst well,” said the grim and grizzled Antonio. “Without thee and thy sleep-song *el extranjero* might have been even now hunting the forest for the night-birds of Cozumel, and it would have fared hard with us had we attempted to capture him when his eyes were open! His enemies fear him and admire him,—the young *Gringo!*”

“But why,” asked Manuel, “have we taken him?”

“Are not five hundred *pesos de oro* a good reason?” laughed Antonio. “*Si, amigos*, five hundred dollars for Antonio as master of the vessel, and one hundred for Juanito, and one hundred for Manuelito!”

“Ah!” said Manuel thoughtfully. “But yet, wherefore? Why did we steal upon this stranger, abduct him from an island all uninhabited save by himself, destroy his property, and burn his dwelling down? Who pays the *pesos de oro*?”

“Softly, *amigo mio*; the end is not yet. We do this youth no harm; he will be set free again—perhaps. And now, who pays? and why does he pay? Didst ever hear of Christobal?”

“Who has not heard of the dread chief of the Sublevados!” cried Manuel. “Did he not descend upon my own fishing-camp, two seasons ago, despoil it, and murder two of my companions?”

“Thou hast seen him then?”

“No good Mexican ever saw Christobal and escaped to tell of it.”

"So? Still thou hast seen him. Dost remember the night we were anchored in Espiritu Bay, under the lee of the mangrove islet?"

"I remember," broke in Juanito; "I rowed you ashore, and you talked two hours with a tall and stately Indian while Manuelito watched, rifle in hand, ready to fire at *el barbero*, should he attempt to harm us."

"True; and yet Manuelito has not seen Christobal!"

"Was *that* Christobal? *Dios mio!*"

secret of their origin, and even going down into the country of *los barbaros*, whence they returned uninjured — though *Dios* knows they may not have deserved at all a safe exit! But they returned to Cozumel, and his *compañeros* sailed away North without him, leaving him there alone.

"Now, answer for yourselves like true Mexicans: Did those *compañeros* intend that *el solitario* should remain here alone forever? Did they not certainly intend, instead, to return leading armies prepared to invade the country, carry the Sublevados into



THE SLEEP-SONG OF THE MAYAS.

"None other — most famous of the Sublevados, our most revengeful enemy. Now listen, and I will tell what he had to say to me — to me, Antonio Caravel, humble fisher of turtle on the shore of Yucatan."

Antonio paused, for he had been eating all this time; took a long draught from a water-gourd, and then began a singular narration:

"You must know that this young American came here to our country uninvited; that he and his companions roamed through the sacred forests for months, shooting the wild birds and beasts, peering into the ruined temples as if to pry out the

slavery, and plunder the sacred cities beyond? Of this Christobal feels certain. Though he be a savage Christobal has the wisdom of chieftains. This was the subject of our converse on the Espiritu sands. Sure it is that Christobal feared an invasion of Americanos, and engaged me to remove the guide — this white bird-hunter — kill him he dare not, mind you all! No army without a guide and leader can penetrate the sacred interior. So would the invasion come to naught forever. So it was the great Sublevado chief gave to me the seven hundred *pesos de oro* to remove the dread *Gringo* from the island, to a place far and forever distant

—and this we have done, and two hundred *pesos* are yours, my friends. Let us to the division.”

Manuel and Juanito eagerly assented, for their fingers had been itching for a grasp on the leathern pouch which Antonio had brought aboard with him and carefully stowed away in his bunk.

He went below, now, and then came up, the bag in his hand, pouring its contents out upon the top of the “house.” The sloop was sailing along on level keel and the glittering coins did not roll away. Beneath the dim light of an oil lantern suspended to the main-boom they clustered around their treasure, with hands trembling for its division. The man at the wheel and the cook were the only other members of the crew; the latter was busy in the galley, but the former stood just behind the group, and saw the shining heap of silver and gold as it poured from the inverted bag. He could not restrain an exclamation of wonder, and craned his neck to look over Antonio’s shoulder, letting slip his hold on the wheel for a moment, thereby causing the craft to lurch, setting some of the *pesos* rolling wildly about the deck.

Antonio jumped up with a cry, while the helmsman recovered himself, and the two companions scrambled after the fugitive coins. These were soon all gathered again, apparently, and they proceeded to count them, dividing the gold from the silver. But the number of *pesos* did not tally with Antonio’s expectations; there were two *onzas* of gold missing—two golden doubloons of sixteen dollars each.

“That rascally Pedro,” muttered Antonio. “Why didn’t he mind the sloop! *Hola!* Juanito, you’re sitting on an *onza*; get up, sly thief, and render over the other!”

Saying which, Antonio excitedly reached out and snatched a gold piece from under the strippling’s leg.

“Give me the other, *perillo*. dog of a boy, or I’ll throw you into the sea!”

Juanito protested; he had not seen the other, and his sitting on the one was an accident. Antonio refused to believe him. Gathering the coins into the pouch, he hurriedly thrust it into a corner and advanced threateningly. But Juanito was a plucky youth who had always fought for a living, and had held his own. Seeing the old sailor’s intention, he backed up against the rail and drew his knife. Then Antonio smiled diabolically,

made a feint at him with his left hand and, as the knife flashed out to meet it, stooped quickly, seized the boy by the leg, and whirled him over the rail into the sea.

CHAPTER II.

THE DESCENDANT OF MALINCHE.

There was less of confusion on board the sloop than one unused to Mexicans would have expected. At the time they were running very near an island with white ledges jutting out into the water, an islet densely covered with vegetation. The helmsman was for putting the vessel about and throwing a rope to the boy who was swimming lustily astern. But Antonio forbade:

“Let him alone; the water will cool his blood. Run into yonder bay, where the rim of sand lies between the two cliffs. He will follow.”

Hurling a malediction at the swimmer, he turned on his heel. Soon the bay was reached—a little cove, rather—and the dying breeze, cut off by the cliffs, drove their bows gently upon the sand. Anchor was thrown out, master and mate leaped ashore. Then Juanito, sullenly shaking the water from his face, reached up for the gunwale and climbed over in. He found the cook and helmsman laughing over the affair, and soon he saw that his master, having had the best of it, had concluded to forget the quarrel, especially as he had discovered the gold-piece, under a coil of rope. But Juanito had no intention of forgetting. That sudden plunge into the dark waters which were sometimes swarming with sharks was not an agreeable incident. He paid no attention to the overtures of Antonio. Refusing to go ashore and join the others, he crawled off upon the deck, where he divested himself of his scanty garments and wrung the water from them. As he was reaching out for a blanket, in which to wrap himself, for the night was cool, his arm was arrested in mid-air by a slight movement of the hitherto silent prisoner who lay where they had stretched him out under the gunwale. The fingers of his left hand were working feebly, as if to untie the withes that bound the wrists.

Following up, with a glance, from the hand to the head, Juanito was met by a flash from a clear brown eye, which gazed into his unflinchingly, and

yet inquiringly. The light from the lantern fell directly upon the prisoner's face, bringing it out clearly, as he lay on his back in the semi-darkness. It was a young, handsome, white "American" face. As the Mexican lad gazed at him a look of admiration sprang into his eyes. Then a sudden flash of resolve crossed his face like a brilliant smile. He gathered the blanket about him, advanced, sat down by the prostrate form, took the weak hands and began to unbind the wrists. Suddenly he stopped short.

Bending down to the prisoner's ear, he whispered: "*Habla usted Espanol?*—Do you speak Spanish?"

A movement of the head answered him. "So? Then you can understand. If I unbind you, you will not try to escape—not to-night? Nor will you harm me?"

"No." The answer came huskily, as though by great effort.

Then Juanito again attacked the withes, nor did he desist until the young man was free. After several efforts to regain his feet "*el Norte Americano*," as Juanito designated him in his mind, finally reached a sitting posture, aided by his liberator. He looked about him, in a dazed way, leaning against the rail, breathing heavily, and evidently with difficulty.

Juanito regarded him critically. "That will pass," he said half to himself, "that will pass very soon. Lie down again, I advise you," he whispered in Spanish. "You will breathe better. Then, too, Antonio is there on the beach; he should not see you. You of course do not know Antonio. But so do I. Therefore I hate him! Also you should hate him. You and I shall have a revenge! They will sleep on shore, but just now they are coming aboard. Therefore lie down."

The brown-eyed lad fell back listlessly in his first position. The master of the vessel stumbled past without noticing him. He paid little attention either to Juanito, simply ordering him to take some bedding ashore, and the cooking utensils. Then securing the bag of money and a bottle of *aguardiente*, and casting a glance around to see that the vessel was in proper trim, he and Manuel rejoined the cook and the helmsman on the beach.

It was at about three o'clock in the morning that Juanito crept quietly to the bows, a sharp knife in his hand. Twenty minutes later, or there-

abouts, the white stranger, still lying under the lee-rail, heard a soft splash in that direction; then the young Mexican came aft to him, and grasping his arm, motioned him to look over the rail. He raised himself painfully. He could see that the black cliffs seemed moving past them. It was with a faintly-perceptible motion, at first; but soon the white line of sand grew blurred, then dimmer and more dim, finally fading away completely in the darkness. The clear brown eyes turned inquiringly upon the boy. Juanito chuckled, and rubbed his hands:

"Do you know what I did? No? I cut the cable!"

"You and I are free, then?" murmured the prisoner, also in Spanish.

"Free? Yes! Only not so fast. Old Antonio has his rifle. And how would you like to hear a bullet singing over you, or boring a hole through you, perhaps? I have heard old Antonio's bullets hiss and sing; yes, and they were *sent after me*, too. *Si, señor Americano*; my old master stops not to think when *he* feels anger; he fires at you first; perhaps then he reflects—who knows! Señor, I am different; it is not a very little that makes me in anger; but then I wait and think long how I can best pay back. We will not pay back for throwing me into the sea, and for dragging *el señor* from his island? O, no! He will not feel the loss of his good sloop, with its cargo of fish and turtle-shell? O, no! And he will not miss the faithful Juanito, either, who has done his bidding these many years? O, no!"

Juanito looked as though revenge was sweet.

"It is sometimes better not to take revenge, my friend," said the weak voice at his elbow, dreamily.

Juanito stared at him. Even the *padre*, priest of the village where he was born, stood on his defence and retaliated. But his companion was too weary to talk, even to return his gaze. He showed no anxiety, no interest in his own fate. Juanito desisted from questioning him, and crept softly below. Just before dawn he came again, bringing with him food and drink. The "North American" mechanically roused to take the nourishment, and with a grateful sigh he acknowledged Juanito's cold sponging of his face and hands and neck. Then he seemed to look about him, scanning the open sea with interest.

They had, by this time, drifted out of sight of

the shore-line of the island, although not out of sound of its surf which beat upon the rocks with a dull roar. The night-breeze still blew brisk in the channel between island and mainland, and they slowly drifted within its influence. Then, when Juanito thought the creaking of the blocks could not reach the shore, he hoisted the sail, carefully, an inch at a time, his prisoner getting on his feet to assist. The craft felt the new impulse, and moved more swiftly; the wind was from the east, and blowing them farther and farther from the island.

Placing the stranger at the helm, with directions to shape a course northwardly, Juanito, in obedience to his sailor instinct, proceeded to make everything ship-shape on deck; but presently he came aft again. The gray of dawn was now taking the place of the star-lit darkness, and he extinguished their light, which had been anxiously guarded. "We will watch with our own eyes for land and enemies, *amigo*," said he.

There was need to watch. Mugeris, the island on which the crew had been left in slumber, was not entirely desolate; a fishing village lay on the other side, and Juanito knew this, and also that the old captain would lose no time in crossing the long stretch of scrub-forest that lay between him and the village to secure a vessel for pursuit.

He also knew that the deserted mariners would not awake till daylight, and that it would take them at least three hours to reach the village. Perhaps, at least he hoped so, still another hour would be wasted in securing a boat. He calculated, then, upon having nearly half a day's start of his pursuers; but he knew that he must rely more upon his knowledge of the inlets and lagunas of the coast, than upon the sailing qualities of the sloop, which was not by any means a fast one.

The day passed and night fell again. Unless they wished to sail up into the unknown expanse of the Gulf of Mexico, they should now change their course; but instead, Juanito held the more northwardly, till midnight, in order to baffle the enemy, who knew the coast even better than they did. Then he changed again, due southwest now, having reached a point nearly one hundred miles from land.

As they sat together after putting the sloop about, Juanito suddenly interrogated his prisoner: "What does *el señor Americano* call himself?"

"My name," the American answered, "is John—John North."

"Juan Norte; and mine, too, is John—Juanito. Juanito Alcantara, *señor, al servicio de usted*—at your service. And what was *el señor* doing down here in Cozumel? For what was he waiting in Cozumel? Why did the chief of the Sublevados pay great pesos to rid Cozumel of *el señor*—a boy like me?"

"Christobal!" cried the American with interest. "Was this ship in the service of Christobal?"

Juanito told the story of the drugged chocolate, and gave him Antonio's account. The young prisoner smiled at the great chief's fears, but as Juanito talked he revolved many things in his mind, and half resolved that there should be an "army" and an "invasion" not of soldiers, as the great Maya chief had feared, but of scientists and explorers—an army with torches and spades. Once more he would behold his little Princess Xia and her brother, and this time he would remain and give the Silver City a strong and wise government. His heart beat high at the thought of the true and tender and trustful young Princess. "With Xia and Zan, and their people, will I abide," said he. Ah! what a dream! Sitting there on deck of the kidnapped sloop, with no human being in reach except this golden-skinned young Mexican, how was he to reach home and secure the money and the men for explorations in Yucatan! Mysterious and terrible Yucatan! O for money! A million was not too much!

With a sigh he turned back to Juanito: "Why was I left in Cozumel? Because I *would* be left. I had an unredeemed promise to the United States Government. I had promised the Government specimens of the birds of Yucatan. I staid to do it. I had nearly done it. I should have shipped them North within the year. Now you have undone my work. You have burned my specimens, my journals, my three years' work! My future too, and the future of others!"

"What will *el señor* do?" said Juanito humbly.

"*El señor*" set his white teeth. "I will go back to Cozumel," said he. "But I will first go home for men and money."

"I will get money for *el señor*, and I will be one man for him," said Juanito.

John smiled. But Juanito's soft big black eyes were fixed on him gravely. "I can serve *el Norte Americano*," he said.

John smiled again, and patted the bronze hand that lay on the gunwale as he might have patted the head of a dumb, loving dog or horse.

They sailed for days, taking watch and watch, sleeping and waking by turn. But at last, one afternoon, the Mexican came and said, "Another night and one part of a day and we shall sail into River Coatzacoalcos. There we come beyond reach of my master."

"And when we have reached a port will my friend Juanito send word to Antonio that his property is there, waiting to be restored to him?"

The Mexican looked at him steadily for a space.

"*Señorito*, 'Little Master,'" said he, "you are older than Juanito. You have had learning set before you in the schools. You have had father and mother to teach you good from the bad. Juanito has had no school; nobody cared; only Antonio took him that he might have one to work for him, to do for nothing what others do for pay. Ten years Juanito has served Antonio. Faithfully Juanito has served him. What has Juanito to-day?"

The boy stood erect, with his great black eyes overflowing with emotion, and pointed to his scant and ragged garments. "This is all, *señorito*—all that Antonio has given for ten years' service!"

It afterward transpired that the boy had been for years as a slave to the turtle-catcher; this was his first break for liberty. It was but fair, to his mind, that he should seize the craft—if he could—as an equivalent for all the debts of the past.

His New England-born companion was touched by this plea for justice; he felt a thrill of compassion for the boy. He resolved to secure him his dues if possible. Yet of course the Mexican's property must be restored. But he wisely deferred further discussion until a time should come for action.

Meantime through all his conversation a name had been ringing in his ears: Coatzacoalcos.

"Why do we go to Coatzacoalcos, Juanito?"

"Because"—the boy hesitated; "there we may escape Antonio."

"Is there no other reason?"

The streak of red in the boy's cheek spread beyond its accustomed limits. Then he answered: "Juanito has friends there."

"At the port?"

"No; in the interior, on the *llanos*; there Juanito was born; there his ancestors lived, for nearly three hundred years."

"That is a long time."

"*Sí*, my family is a very old one, *señor*."

"Old as the Conquest?"

"More than that," answered Juanito; "before the Spaniards came here my people ruled this region. Does 'Little Master' know about the Conquest?"

"Yes; I have read of it in history."

"Then he knows that Cortez, the Great Captain, came here; even just here; he sailed along this very coast; he landed at Tabasco."

"Yes, Juanito, I know; it was in 1519."

"Then the *señorito* knows that when he came to Coatzacoalcos he was met by some of our caciques, who presented him with a beautiful Indian maiden?"

"Yes, Juanito; it was the most romantic episode of that gloomy campaign. And she was a blessing to Cortez and the Spaniards, this Indian maiden, for she served them as interpreter and brought over to their cause many other Indians."

"*Amigo*, you tell it well, better than Juanito can, because he has not seen it in the books; Juanito had it from the stories told him by the old ones. But Malinche, the beautiful Indian girl, was a princess of Tabasco, was she not? She followed the fortunes of *el capitán*, Cortez, faithfully, did she not? And then, after the wars were over, she returned to her own land, to her own native town, and there dwelt in honor, did she not?"

"Yes, Juanito, you and history agree."

Juanito's eyes were glowing, his form dilated, and his handsome face was alive with feeling.

"Malinche was of royal blood. Antonio often laughed at me because I claimed her as my ancestor and was proud of it."

"Do you mean, Juanito, that you are a descendant of Malintzin, the heroine of the Conquest?" cried John, thrilled with the most romantic astonishment.

"*Sí, señorito*; and in her own town, on the land that once was hers, I, Juanito, lived, when a child." Then a fierce gleam lit up his face, and he added: "But *how* did Juanito live there? Does the *señorito* know? No? He lived there as the child of slavery! *Si!*" This last word was hissed forth, as a serpent might have uttered it. "*Si!* On the land once his family's own, secured to it by the country Malinche saved to the Spaniards; taken from it by sons of those same

Guachupines, and with it our freedom; *Maldicion!*"

John gazed at the lad. This was most stirring, most strange! But why should it not be true? Juanito was a handsome lad, as fine in form and feature as the cherished young Prince of the Silver City. He took his hand. "Heaven help us both!" said he gently, in Spanish. "Let us stand by each other."

He left him at the helm and went forward to tend the sail. But when he returned, Juanito's excitement had not gone down. His dark face was almost beautiful with its glows and reds as he turned to John, and spoke rapidly: "Does *el señorito* wish *much* for money?"

"Yes," said the "Little Master," with a smile, "that he does."

"Juanito means immense riches; gold and sil-

can," said John. He turned now to Juanito with more attention than he had as yet shown.

"He was the great King of the Aztecs," went on the young Mexican with kindling eye. "He had gold, gold, gold, chambers of yellow gold. Where did he get it, Little Master?"

"I have heard," replied John, "that he got it from the mines of Malinaltepec. My father told me much of these same mines, Juanito. My father was for many years a prisoner among the fierce Lacandones. There he learned much of the secret of the Aztec treasure. When he went home to the North, he left me the description of the mines. I used to dream sometimes in Cozumel that I would go and search for them. But I always saw many obstacles in the way; I cannot speak the language of the Indians of the country holding the mines, and now I have lost the clue my father gave me. You burned it, Juanito."

"What was the clue, *señorito*?"

"It was a book, written by Cortez, the conqueror, and in it were described the mines of Montezuma, and the way to them."

"*Dios mio, señorito!* Then if we had that book how easy all our desires would be fulfilled?"

"I do think we together might possibly have found the ancient mines," said John.

"But why not try without that book? Juanito knows all the Indian knows about the treasure-vaults; he can speak the Zapotec, that is spoken by the Indians of the hills; and he knows the direction to reach that region. More than this, *amigo*, look!" He thrust his hand into his bosom and drew out a little leather case, which was suspended about his neck by a string. "Always I carry this with me; it has in it the proof of my descent from Malinche, and it has—but let *señorito* trust me. It was a gift from a great chieftain of the hills to Malinche. It is three hundred years old and more, Little Master."

The boys talked far into the deepening afternoon. No more fascinating and romantic matter ever occupied two lads. No stranger situation could be. The most wonderful adventure was possible. They were already so near the coast that another hour would land them on the mysterious historical shores. The slant rays of the sinking sun bathed a white sail and the glistening walls of a town in golden sheen.



JUANITO'S COLD BATH.

ver by the ton; so much that the 'Little Master' might build a Silver City himself."

John laughed. "I shouldn't mind being as rich as even that, Juanito."

"The richest mine in the world—would that tempt Little Master to take a long journey?"

"Probably."

"Will he take it at once?"

"As soon as the existence of this magic mine shall be made clear to him," laughed the Little Master.

"But it *is* clear. At least it can be with the help of *señorito*."

"You speak in riddles, Juanito. Come now, tell me to what mine do you refer?"

"My friend has heard of *el rey* Montezuma?"

"Of course he has heard of that famous Mexi-

MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES.

BY FRED A. OBER.

(Author of "The Silver City.")

CHAPTER III.

FREEDOM FOR JUANITO.

A NARROW inlet broke the line of coast ahead of them. This inlet, Juanito remembered, led to a placid lagoon behind the sand-hills. So he stood in for the bar at its mouth, guiding his course by the foam-flashes of the breakers, and dexterously threading the narrow and winding channel. Finally gliding into smooth water, behind the *medanos*, or sand-hills, they felt a security they had not experienced for several days.

"We can rest now, Little Master," said Juanito; "and if that sail we saw should follow, and should chance to be an enemy—I suppose the great bird-hunter can use a rifle!"

Once they thought they heard the flapping of sails, and hoarse shouts; but no further noise disturbed them, and they went to sleep.

When they awoke, it was broad day; the tropic sun was laughing at them over the tree-tops. "*Señorito*," said Juanito, "Little Master—I call you that because you are the leader-born—the wind is rising, and we should at once sail out into the river."

A town lay at the mouth of the Coatzacoalcos; but this they managed to avoid by taking a swampy passage leading out of the western end of the lagoon. Emerging they entered the great river, and aimed to reach another town, twenty miles higher up, which, Juanito said, was called Minatitlan. The current was swift and the wind fitful, as great trees rose high above the swampy shores, and they were obliged often to labor for hours at the oars. Late in the afternoon they reached the town, five hundred miles distant from the island they had drifted from the week before. It was not an attractive village, being mostly Indian huts. But they were not travellers looking for attractions; the village was the starting-point for a long overland journey into the interior. It was the first stepping-stone, in fact, across the unknown distance between them and the misty region of gold.

They drew up to the rotting wharf, both too busy to notice a man apparently in waiting; a man who looked at the two young sailors as though sighting along a rifle-barrel.

Juanito suddenly saw him. "As I thought!" exclaimed he. "That boat in sight, as we entered the inlet, held Antonio and Manuel. So, Little Master."

"Welcome, *caballeros*, welcome to Minatitlan!" That harsh and jeering voice belonged, without a doubt, to the old grizzly Antonio. He threw his head back and laughed at the sight of his ship and his slave. Another man, who had run rapidly up into the town, as Juanito and his craft had hove in sight, now came back, an *alcalde* and three rusty, ragged soldiers at his heels. They were dirty, and under-sized—these soldiers—their muskets rude rattling old weapons of a pattern quite unknown to John; but the men were backed by the majesty of the law, resistance would have been useless, and our young New Englander waited in silence. Juanito, with an imprecation, took up a rifle; but John restrained his movements by a motion, and he dropped it, shrugged his shoulders, and the next moment was following gloomily after his companion as he climbed to the wharf.

The ferocious-visaged Indians marched them both off to the *calaboza*, or jail, a stone building with massive walls, and thrust them into a mouldy room with a single grated window, swarming with innumerable cockroaches and centipedes.

John said nothing, did nothing, for a while. He sat as if in a stupor. But Juanito, glowering at the dungeon door, sullenly occupied himself with whetting his knife upon the stones of his cell. "It is for Antonio," he muttered; "if I can get at him only, I will pay him *his* wages. He has earned wages of me. I owe him debts, large debts, Little Master."

John looked at him with a gesture of disapprobation. After a moment he said, "You believe in me, Juanito? You trust me, do you not?"

"*Sí, señorito.*"

"Do you not believe that I can cope with Antonio, that I can set you free from him?"

Juanito hesitated; he had great faith in the young white man, but he knew Antonio. "Antonio is a crafty dog, *señorito*."

"Without doubt, Juanito. He shall do you justice, however. Revenge we do not want, do we, *amigo*?"

Amigo—"friend;" this word seemed to touch the Mexican lad. "*Amigo*," he syllabled softly, instead of replying to John. In years and years nobody had called him "friend." "*Señorito*," he said at last, laying down his knife, rising to his feet, and looking up at John, "I am not yet worthy to be called 'friend.' Juanito has yet to atone for stealing the Little Master from the Isla Cozumel. How can the Little Master trust Juanito—that Juanito who did Antonio's bidding on Cozumel—that Juanito?"

"Because," answered the American, "the Juanito who did Antonio's wicked work is not the one who now confesses it."

"*Es verdad*," admitted the boy, "it is true. There was a good Juanito hidden within the bad one, all the time; but he might never have come up into the light had it not been for *señorito*. So it is that the good Juanito will ever be at his service. But the bad one thirsts for revenge upon Antonio"—he added fiercely, "thirsts! thirsts!"

They sat conversing late, then lay down to sleep upon the stone floor. No beds, no food had been provided.

Early next morning, however, the jailer came with a simple meal; and at nine o'clock he came again, followed by the *alcalde* and his soldiers, who escorted them to the tribunal before which the old turtle-catcher had brought complaint. There sat the judge, a kindly-looking old man, with white hair and moustache, and black twinkling eyes.

Both Antonio and Manuel were there, and they sprang to their feet with a fierce scowl as the young men entered. The *alcalde*, bearing his silver-tipped wand of office, led the way into the court-room and assigned to each his place. This done, he looked about him savagely, and waved his wand, as though to say: "You see *me*, Don Mariano de la Angostura, *alcalde* of this district; show me a bigger man, if you can." Then he sat down, and glared at everybody in general.

Antonio, corroborated frequently by Manuel,

narrated how it was that his boat had been taken from him, but saying never a word as to the previous happenings of the voyage.

After this account was finished, John was called. The judge, knowing that he was an American, assumed that he could not speak Spanish, and sent out for an interpreter.

"Pardon, your honor," said John, "but I can speak Castilian a little." And then he gave, in Spanish, an account of the taking of the sloop.

The judge seemed to be captivated by his straightforward bearing, and by the purity of his speech. "Ah," he murmured, "*es Castiliano puro*—it is the Castilian of old Spain."

To the evident surprise of Antonio, John had so far confined his story solely to the seizure of the boat. But now, that told, he paused. Then fixing his gaze upon the judge, he said: "Your honor, may I ask a single question?"

"Certainly; *por su puesto*—go on."

"Your honor, I would like to ask, *What is the penalty for kidnaping*?"

"The penalty, upon good and sufficient proof is—*death*!"

John turned towards Juanito's master; the old Mexican shook visibly. His face took on an ashen hue. His eyes glared, and his hand fumbled at his belt.

"*Señor Americano*," said the judge, "you imply something serious by this question. Have you any charge to prefer against any one here?"

John hesitated. He had no desire for revenge. He did not care to drag this unhappy man to jail. Much less would he bring about his death. He was saved immediate action by the old turtle-catcher himself, who, with a fearful cry, dashed away, followed by Manuel. But they leaped through the doorway only to encounter the fixed bayonets of the three soldiers, who halted them, and then compelled them to return.

The judge eying the men sternly, again told John to prefer his complaint.

"I would rather refer them to the clemency of your honor," replied the young man.

"So it may be," said the judge, "but acquaint me with the circumstances."

Then John told the story of his enforced departure from Cozumel, such gaps in the narrative as he could not fill being bridged by Juanito.

"You have just cause for at least incarcerating

these men for life," the judge said when they had finished.

"Your honor, I desire nothing for myself." Then he told the story of Juanito's long slavery. "I do ask that reparation be made this young man," he said, with sudden fire in his eyes, "for long years of unrequited servitude; and also a complete legal release from his master."

The judge reflected a few moments, shading his face with his hand. There was a humorous smile on his lips as he delivered his decision: "Señor Antonio, you received, from the savage, Christobal, seven hundred *pesos de oro* for the performance of a work that might have brought upon you the severest penalty of the law. Since this generous stranger waives his right to complain against you, I may release you from certain legal consequences of that deed, but on conditions: What have you to say against forfeiting your ill-gotten gold?"

Antonio's features writhed with the anguish of one having his heart-strings severed; but he said nothing.

"However," continued the upright Mexican, "in view that you have suffered much inconvenience by the loss of your boat for a time, and have been at some expense, I merely order that you divide equally with your companions the sum given you, and give to your former servant, Juanito, a release forever from service."

There was no appeal from this decision. Before they left the hall, the money was divided, and the papers drawn up and signed by which Juanito received absolute freedom.

It should be explained, in this connection, that in Mexico (even at the present day, although slavery was abolished sixty years ago) thousands of Indians are held in bondage. For by Mexican law, if one of them incur a debt, he must repay it with his labor. The landed proprietors, the owners of *Haciendas*, or large estates, thus hold their *peones*, or laborers, by a grip as strong as ever existed in days of legal slavery. They take good care that their servants never get out of debt, and ever remain slaves. Even death does not release these victims, for their obligations descend upon their children, and through them to their remote descendants. One of Juanito's ancestors had been made the victim of this iniquitous law, through the conspiracy of the Spanish rulers, and hence his family had rested under the ban of peonage. It

was through purchase of this obligation that Antonio had acquired possession of Juanito, while other Mexicans held other members of his family. By the sentence of the Minatitlan judge, the lad was now rendered a free man, forever released from all claims, and in full possession of his rights. He was so stupefied at his good fortune, that he could only cling to his *padron's* hand, and kiss it gratefully.

But when it came to the division of Christobal's gold, Juanito refused to take the portion counted out to him; he would have none of it—it was the price of a crime. Nor would he take it in consideration of his ten years of toil. But let Antonio look to himself! if ever he crossed his path!

"My son," protested the judge, "I shall take this money for you. I will give your friend here a receipt—the time will come when you will see fit to call for the gold and will be able to make good use of it. What is your name?" He paused, pen in hand.

"Juanito Alcantara, your worship," answered the lad, still glowering at his old master.

"Alcantara! What! But surely not of the family of Tuxtla!"

"The same, your worship!"

"Mother of Mercy!" cried the judge. "What wrong that a descendant of our Princess should have been in slavery. May God requite your sorrows!"

He evidently regarded the lad with interest from this moment. "Jesu!" he muttered, turning away. "And this in the native province of his noble ancestress! What wrong! what injustice! No wonder is it that the gentle spirit of the great Princess walks the old gardens of Chapultepec!"

He congratulated the young men warmly on their escape from the turtle-catcher, plainly believing that John had been destined for as bad a fate as Juanito's. "*Dios mio!*" he exclaimed again, addressing John, "that the descendant of the kind Malinche, of the noble Knight Jaramillo—he of the *Conquistadors*—should have served as a fisherman's slave! He belongs in the royal city, in the Street of Medinas! The blood of the Aztec Princess shows in his cheek and in his eye—see!"

In truth Juanito had flushed and kindled as he heard the judge recount his historic ancestry, and brow and cheek flamed anew now at the

sense of his long slavery. "I hate like the Spaniard!" he cried out fiercely. "I cannot forgive like the generous Malinche — no! no, not yet!" he added, meeting John's eyes.

The romantic story of Donna Marina, the Aztec interpreters for the *Conquistadors*, had long ago been familiar to John in the pages of Prescott, and now the strange incidents came one by one back into his remembrance as he sat in the dingy old Mexican law-court. Was this golden-skinned youth indeed a descendant of a royal standard-bearer of the time of Cortez and the Conquest —

then, is at your disposal while you make your plans. My advice and assistance also are at your service."

After a moment's reflection, John confided to him that they had intended to go upon a journey of exploration, more or less extended, into the interior.

The judge told them to bring their effects from the vessel, while he would send out to find them some trusty canoemen, since the river was their route for the present.

Manuel and Antonio had disappeared as soon



IN CUSTODY: ON THE WAY TO THE TRIBUNAL.

Don Juan Xaramillo, one of Cortez's Castilian Knights? This living paragraph of old history almost confused his brain, intimate with romance as he had been in Yucatan. His proposed quest for the lost gold mines appeared to him, for the moment, no fantasy. He reverted to the old New England farmhouse, his father and mother and brother, and questioned his own sanity.

Meanwhile he was listening to the courteous words of the high-minded old Mexican judge. "You are here strangers, and worse. My house,

as released; but with a soldier the young men overtook them before they had launched the boat, and they were made to deliver over Juanito's few possessions. They did this with ill-grace. They swore, as soon as they were safe in mid-stream, that they would be amply revenged for all their trouble.

"Let it so stand," cried Juanito, hurling back their taunts; "but remember that I too have accounts to settle! You have not finished with your slave!"

CHAPTER IV.

UP THE COATZCOALCOS.

John and Juanito remained guests of the judge for two days, during which time the Mexican exerted himself to the utmost to forward their plans. He engaged a great canoe with rowers, provisioned it for the journey, and gave them medicines to ward off the evil effects of the malarious climate of the lowlands. He asked no questions. But when one day they mentioned the locality they intended to explore, his black eyes twinkled: "It is a grand search, young men. Say not a word. I would join you, were it not for my age and family. I too have had my dreams. But bring to me some memento of *il rey*, if it be only a hatchet of copper." They promised, laughingly, to bring him one of the largest nuggets of gold, making no effort to dispel his sagacious conclusions.

On the morning of the third day they said *adios*, and launched their canoe upon the great river, alone again, with no company but the sinewy Indians tugging at their paddles. They were on a tropical river, where palms rose on each bank, projecting their heads above the mass of vegetation that walled them in; where vines hung from sombre trees and fell to the water—vines spangled with flowers, and odorous with a thousand blossoms; where orchids and wild pines sat astride great branches and shot into the air their spikes of bloom, and lianas hung like cables and cordage from the leafy canopy above. The solemn, sullen river rolled on its dark flood without a sound, and the paddle-dips and cries of their boatmen alone disturbed the silence.

It was not once absent from the young commander's mind that they were voyaging through a country rich in aboriginal traditions and in memories of the Spanish Conquest, and he would gladly have halted on his journey to penetrate within and examine places where interesting events had taken place. All the region he hourly left behind was once astir with martial music, and the forests about Tabasco and Coatzacoalcos alive with gathering hordes of angry Indians, assembled to repel the invaders. For there Cortez landed, in 1519, and had his first conflict with the natives; and there the first horses ever upon the soil of Mexico were brought into terrible

contact with the Indians. Against fearful odds, fought the poor people who were thus invaded, put to defending themselves on their own soil; and when they had brought up their well-trained troops in masses and hurled them upon the Spaniards, and the strangers were about to retreat, there then appeared the apparition of the horses, Cortez's cavalry, brought from Cuba, of fiery chestnut horses in glittering caparison. Astonished, the poor creatures gazed with awe at these fearful monsters, pawing, snorting, screaming, rearing. They had never before seen an animal larger than the tapir of their forests; and when, simultaneously, the black-mouthed cannon began playing into their ranks, they abandoned their positions, together with their freedom and independence, and fled. Man for man, with their weak shields of quilted-cotton, they had been nearly a match for the mailed warriors of Cortez, brave and worthy Indians under the leadership of valiant chiefs, true patriots. But the horses and the cannon appalled them, as later they appalled Montezuma himself. They sued for peace, and begged pardon of their conquerors. After Cortez's soldiers had retired, hundreds of wounded creatures—Juanito's countrymen—must have crawled into these forests to die while the smoke of their burning houses floated in the air.

This was three hundred and sixty years ago, and since that time the natives—a brave people, John knew from both Bernal Diaz and Prescott—had been more or less under the influence of the Spaniard. Juanito told him, however, that in their religion they were still more pagan than Roman Catholic, still dancing savage dances about their altars and sacred images.

Three days of this water-travelling, halting at night for a camp, and pushing on rapidly soon after sunrise, brought them to a point where the stream became narrow, winding, and shallow. Here it was determined to take to the woods; the Indian canoemen, transforming themselves into carriers, were to leave the boat hidden in the rank grass (which now overhung the water) and transport their effects two long days of travel still further into the deep and mysterious forest. It had seemed forbidding enough, as they viewed it from the boat; but now that they were to penetrate it, and wind their way between the slimy tree-trunks and amongst the dripping growth of vines

and parasitic plants, the real obstacles of the journey seemed for the first time to appear.

Two days and nights they were buried in the gloom of the great forest; they camped where darkness overtook them, resuming their journey at daybreak. On the afternoon of the third day, worn down with fatigue, they found a clearing in the wood, through which their trail led. The small thatched hut was surrounded by a half-wild garden thinly planted with shrubs that John had never seen before. They were about two feet high, some of them bearing small reddish flowers



IN TOKEN THAT HE WAS UNARMED.

and some long crooked pods containing yellow seeds; while all had curious winged leaves.

The owner of the clearing soon appeared, and was surprised at seeing strangers, and a white man amongst them. But he invited them in and set about preparing a meal. John questioned him, through his own Indians, as to the strange shrub in the garden, and was told that it was a dye-stuff. They gave him its Aztec name, *Xiuhquilitzahuac*, and told him it grew wild throughout Tabasco, Chiapas, and Yucatan. After puzzling over it some time, it suddenly occurred to him that it was

indigo, a native plant of the country, cultivated and in use by the aborigines before the Conquest. This indigo has several species, represented in both hemispheres, which produce the famous dye known to the ancients of Egypt and India; the Mexican species being known as *Indigofera anil*.

This clearing in the forest, letting in the sunlight amongst trees that would have been unnoticed in the general gloom of the thick woods, brought to light many species, among them mahogany and rosewood. One tree which our young naturalist noticed, growing among the rocks, with a large trunk, straggling branches, and fragrant flowers of lovely red, proved to be the rare Brazil-wood (*Caesalpinia Brasiliensis*) the heart of which not only furnishes a rich red dye, but is susceptible of high polish. This poor Indian, indeed, was surrounded by precious woods that, on the coast, would have made his fortune, but here were not worth the cutting. The crowning proof of the worthlessness of these rare and beautiful woods when far from a market, was found in the Indian's hogpen, for it was of rosewood.

The Indian himself was insensible to the wonder his useless riches excited, and never looked up from his hospitable labor. When this was done, he invited John and Juanito to sit down on a mahogany log, and eat. He answered briefly all questions, but never once asked of the strangers whence they had come, where they were going, or why they had paid him this unexpected visit.

"Did you notice the Indian, when he passed us the water-gourd?" asked Juanito of John. "Did you mark how he clasped his left hand with the right, and bowed low, as he gave it to you?"

"Yes. What did he mean by it? I thought it a peculiar performance."

"He meant nothing more than his ancestors had taught him; it is an ancient custom. It signifies that he is your servant, your most humble *servidor*; and he clasps his hands together—the wrist of one with the hand of the other—that you may see he has no weapon ready to stab you with. He belongs to a most peaceful tribe; but they were not always so peaceful. Once was, when they fought with the Spaniards, and they were hard to be subdued. Even when they were their servants, they were rebellious, and dangerous. So, their masters ordered that whenever they came near them they should clasp their hands together, or

hold them out, in token that they were unarmed."

"He differs from our Indians, in many ways," said John. "He seems to belong to a new tribe."

"Yes, and it shows that we have nearly reached the end of our foot-march, Little Master, and are near the great *hacienda* the judge told us of, where we get horses. This man is a *Zoque*, belonging to a tribe living on the skirts of the hills we seek to penetrate. Let me question him.

The Indian seemed surprised. "Why, *maestros*, you are even there; a day's march further shows you *el hacienda grande*."

"Are there horses there? Can we find *caballos* for a journey over the hills?"

"*Caballos! hay millones, maestros; millones!*"

"Let us go on at once," urged John. "I am anxious to get astride a horse and find this great and gloomy forest behind me."

But Juanito objected. It was late in the day; he thought it better to stop with the Indian, and make the trip by daylight. "Juanito know this land best," he said proudly. He yielded, however, to John's arguments. Giving the hospitable Indian a silver-piece, they were about to depart, when he stopped them.

"The *señores* had better not camp in the forest. Here is the cabin of their servant; let them take and occupy it, he will himself give it for their use solely. In the forests are serpents—*muchos serpientes*—more than a rod in length; and *los tigres* which devour all travellers by night."

"The *Zoque* speaks truly," said Juanito; "the forest ahead of us, as it is higher up, holds more of wild beasts; it is better to stop, Little Master."

But John laughed and shouldered his rifle. Juanito, with a flash of wrath from his black eyes, took up his and, motioning the Indian carriers to follow them, strode into the wood. After two hours' tramp they entered an opening, where a little stream flowed beneath some giant trees. It seemed a good place for a camp, and they threw down their burdens. A fire was built, chocolate was boiled, and as darkness descended they were ready for the hammocks already stretched between the trees, when Juanito said, "Juan hopes Little Master may wake on the morrow."

"O," laughed John, "these are not my first nights by a forest fire. You forget my experiences in Yucatan."

Those experiences in Yucatan! Again the tale was told for the Mexican lad, and again they discussed the plan of a forced return to the Silver City. Then they reverted to the lost gold mines of Montezuma, and speculated upon the chances of finding the book of Cortez. "I mentioned the book to the judge," said John, "but though he has a fair library himself, he had never seen this volume. He had heard, however, of it, in the library of the Institute at Vera Cruz; and if it should seem absolutely necessary we *could* make a journey there and read it."

"It might save us time, then," said Juanito. "Who can tell? Juanito can lead to the region of gold, but he may be months seeking the mine's mouth. Yet that too Juanito *can* do."

John lay long awake, looking up into the leafy canopy overhead, a covering so dense and dark that no portion of the sky could be seen. His thoughts went back to his first meeting with the boy. He admired his courage and pride, and admitted that there must be great native goodness in him—some drop of Donna Marina's generous blood—to survive the base, hard treatment of the past ten years. He would do all in his power to develop his better qualities and to shape his future.

With this renewed resolution, John endeavored to shut his eyes for sleep; but they persistently fastened upon a bright thing, like a diamond, glistening in the tree above; it might have been a drop of water; but it glittered more brightly moment by moment and seemed to move slightly as now his steady eyes regarded it. He could even believe, at last, this diamond drop to be set in a round and glistening head, which presently lengthened itself into a dark and sinuous body, winding about the thick branches of the tree in countless convolutions. But now an oppressive sense of sleep long deferred asserted its claims, weighed his eyelids down, and he closed them, at last, and slumbered heavily.

Had he remained awake he would have seen the diamond disappear, the convolutions separate, and again combine, the dark body glide lower and lower. He saw nothing, however; and knew nothing, until wakened by a sense of suffocation. Then he shouted hoarsely, as he struggled to free himself from the slowly-compressing folds that enwrapped him: "Juanito! Juanito!"

MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES.

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CHAPTER V.

FOREST, CAMP, AND SADDLE.

JUANITO!" The cry was half stifled, but the young Indian heard it, and leaped from his hammock. The carriers also sprang up and darted towards the spot indicated by the voice. It was so dark they could scarce distinguish the writhing bulk of the boa from the human form it had enclosed, and they hurriedly lighted torches at the smoldering embers of the fire. They were not startled by the sight that then met them, for they lived in a land of serpents; but they uttered cries of sympathy for *el capitan*, as he lay, helpless, motionless, within that horrid coil. The weight of the boa had dragged one end of the hammock to the ground, and John was entangled in its meshes, as well as held fast by the serpent which raised its head when the Indians approached, and opened its flexible jaws as if to engulf its prey at once. There was no time to lose, and they lost none, but with their great forest knives hacked at head and tail until the proud crest drooped and the scaly coils loosened. Juanito had guided the Indians, fearlessly seizing the supple neck and endeavoring to drag the head away from such close contact with his master's face. Now extricating John's senseless figure, with the help of the Indians he bore it to the bank of the stream.

John proved to be not severely injured, however, though sprained and bruised, and he sat up with his men the rest of the night about the camp-fire, not caring to seek the hammock again, and at the first signs of daylight they turned their backs upon the tragic spot and took up the line of march for the *hacienda*. It was slow and painful marching to John, at least, but he bore it in silence, realizing that his bruises and sprains had been caused by his own obstinacy in refusing to listen to advice, a fact upon which Juanito generously forbore to comment.

At noon, they emerged upon the skirts of a clearing, and a vast plain lay before them, green with springing grass and dotted in every direction with horses and cattle. Far off, in the midst of this plain, they could see the white walls of the *hacienda* to which they had been directed. This they reached about sunset, approaching its great walls with feelings of joy and relief, for they had good reason to expect shelter and food, as Juanito assured them that no person was ever yet turned away from a Mexican farmhouse when in search of either.

They were not disappointed; they were overcome, in truth, by their reception. Halting on the flags of the broad veranda, they sent in by a *mozo* (or man-servant) the letter given them by the Mexican judge at Minatitlan. It seemed but a moment, and that the *mozo* had had hardly time to traverse the hall, before the *haciendado* appeared, the letter in his hand, and hastened toward them with beaming face.

"Is it the *Señor Norte* that I address?" he said, holding out his hand, and then embracing John, throwing both arms about him, first with his head over one shoulder, then over the other, and all the time patting him on the back with both hands and pouring forth inquiries after his health and the health and welfare of his friends at Minatitlan—this was John's first experience of a Mexican welcome. Juanito received only a pat on the shoulder.

They followed Don Augustino within—that was his name—Don Augustino Díaz del Campo, as he told them with many a wave of his hand, and adding with his hand on his heart, "*servidor de ustedes*—your humble servant, whose house is entirely at your disposal, and all there is in it—*mi casa esta muy á en disposicion, señores, y todo que lo contiene.*"

This fine announcement turned out to be no idle Spanish compliment either. A bountiful dinner was soon spread before his guests by Don Augustino; a dozen courses, ending with frijoles, or

beans of the country, and coffee, from his own plantation. Then, seeing that they were exceeding weary, he sent them off to bed, with a hearty *buenas noches*, declaring that though he was on the point of perishing for news from the coast he would wait till the morrow.

Their sleep was of the soundest, even though John soon dreamed himself into a conflict with a boa-constrictor, and awoke two or three times, bathed in perspiration, and with a choking sensation. The morning found them refreshed, and they appeared on the veranda just as Don Augustino rode up on a powerful horse from making the rounds of his plantation—or rather, from receiving the reports of his overseers. Coffee was brought them, and then it took half the day to satisfy Don Augustino with news, for he had seen no white man from the coast in nearly a twelve-month; and had not been off his *hacienda* in twice that length of time.

This was our New Englander's first view of a *hacienda* outside of books. As he talked with Don Augustino, he looked around him with interest. The house was of stone, long, low, massive, with a broad veranda on two sides, and divided into numerous great, bare, cool rooms. At a respectful distance an immense wall surrounded it, so high that nobody could climb over, so strong that nothing much short of an earthquake could shake it down, and so white that you could hardly look at it when the sun shone on it. A great gateway gave entrance to the space within by day, but at night a barred and bolted gate closed out all intruders. Under the shelter of the wall within were the lowly huts of the *peones*, the laborers, nominally servants, but in reality the slaves of the proprietor. Yet they seemed contented, these swarms of Indians who labored for Don Augustino, and were, perhaps, willing to be in debt, so long as they were never called upon for payment in anything except the labor of their hands. The *hacienda* seemed as strongly built as if intended for a fortress, and Don Augustino assured him that it was considered necessary as Mexico was a land of *pronunciamientos*—or revolutions, and that any day a revolutionary chief might appear before the walls and demand heavy tribute. The Don took this state of affairs lightly, however; and he confessed to having more acres of land than he had ever visited, and more cattle and horses than he

had ever counted. As for his Indian *peones*, he took no note of their number, but let them come and go, and draw their rations at their own sweet will. He lived alone in his great house, and he strongly urged the young men to stay with him, promising to give them horses and land enough to satisfy the most covetous and to enable them to pass their lives in ease.

But it was not a tempting offer to either John or Juanito, and after a week of rest and pleasure with the kind *haciendado*, they signified their intention of departing. They had already mentioned that they should need horses to ride and a mule to carry their luggage, and Don Augustino had promised to supply them. He took them out into the corral now and bade them take their choice, saying they could have any animals they fancied.

The corral was full of horses and colts, a hundred or more, and it was a difficult matter to select; so the major-domo (the farm overseer) drove up two beautiful mares, a black one and a chestnut, saying they were as good as any in the herd, and these were saddled and picketed in the yard in front of the house. The Don took a quiet sort of pride in his horses, saying that many of them were of almost pure Arab blood, and some of them descendants of those magnificent steeds brought over by the first Spaniards during the early years of the Conquest. John's mare, the chestnut, was carefully trained in a peculiar trot called the *passo*, in which the rider is hardly moved in his seat. The art of training a horse to this pace, the Don explained, came down from the *conquistadores*—the warriors of Cortez. It was acquired by means of a peculiar caparison—a heavy leather housing called the *anquera*, which covered the hips and descended to the legs, and was fringed with sharp nails that struck the horses legs when trotting and caused the mincing gait called the *passo*. A rope bridle with its cruel bit was slipped over the mare's head and a peaked Mexican saddle placed on its back, and then the steed was ready for the rider. Juanito's horse was likewise equipped, and a lasso was hung to each saddle and a Mexican blanket, or *serape*, rolled up and strapped behind the seat. The boys hung their carbines at the side, suspended from straps in front of the pommels, and felt fully equipped—gallant young *conquistadores* themselves. After an experimental gallop, they returned to the house,

divested the horses of their trappings, and selected their mule.

This done, John, with much trepidation—for he feared they had taken better beasts than his means would allow—asked Don Augustino how much he was to pay for this outfit. They were sitting on the veranda, sipping their evening chocolate, John and Juanito one side the table and Don Augustino on the other. He looked up, as John

“Señor?”

“I say *nothing*; not a *centaro*; the horses are yours. *Caramba!* Such a fuss over two horses and a mule!”

“But, *señor*, they are valuable, and so are their saddles and trappings.”

“*Caballos*—I have a thousand, more or less; and as for saddles—my *peones* can make me more when I get short.”



DON AUGUSTINO ARRIVES FROM "MAKING THE ROUNDS."

asked, and frowned. “Did *el Americano* expect to pay for the beasts?” he demanded.

“I—I meant to, of course, if—if you—if I have money enough.”

“Then you have *not* money enough,” he growled, looking as black as a thunder-cloud.

The young man’s heart sank; he feared he had made a great mistake in accepting such fine animals; he wished he had taken *burros*, or donkeys, since they were almost valueless.

“But how much?” he persisted.

“Nothing!”

They stared at him in astonishment, until he fairly laughed them out of their surprise and reluctance. “Señor Juan el Norte, you are giving me a bad opinion of your countrymen; are they all beggars in your country? do they not entertain the stranger as the Mexican?”

“Rather less lavishly,” answered John.

“As for Juanito here, there is excuse,” said the Don, with a half-sneer; “he was brought up on the coast, where everybody suspects everybody else, and where hospitality is a thing they have forgotten; yet he ought to have known that a

great *haciendado* would refuse pay for three paltry *caballos*. Still," added he, "as you want to repay me, tell me fairly where you are going, and for what, and I am rewarded."

"Certainly, *señor*, we would have done so long since. You had but to ask," replied John with a light laugh. "We will tell you without reserve, for we may never return, and then you and the Judge could institute some inquiries. You probably have heard of those ancient mines that are said to be in the mountains beyond the great forests? Juanito tells me the tradition is general."

"Yes, yes, of course. I have heard those tales all my life; but what consequence? Indian stories are not to lean upon. No one cares to search."

"But this Indian story is confirmed," said John, partly to quiet Juanito's rising wrath; "the *conquistadores* themselves have left a description of the country and the mines at the time of their discovery."

"So? that would be a different matter. But have you seen any of these writings? have you them with you?"

"No, *señor*, but my father has read the account by Cortez himself, in an old, old manuscript he once found in Tabasco; and he told me of a volume containing the accounts, and that it could be found in the archives of the City of Mexico, if nowhere else."

"And what was it called, Don Juan? what was the book he had read?"

"It was called the *Letters of Cortez*, and was printed within five years after the Conquest—the first portion of it; one of the oldest books in Spain."

"Hold!—*Cartas de Cortez*, 'Letters of Cortez'—where have I seen that book? Somewhere." The *haciendado* leaned his head upon his hand and fell to thinking, shaking his head negatively as reminiscence after reminiscence came up, but not the right one; at last—"I have it! In that old convent of Santa Cruz; we found it deserted; all the monks were gone; the French had just sacked it; I was a *guerrillero*, then—a free-lance—fighting for my country. We strolled through the cloisters and the empty halls, and in the library we found hundreds of books, in parchment bindings and vellum; most of them were religious books, and all of them very old. But one took my fancy, and that was this very book you mention—yes, the *Cartas de Cortez*!"

"Did you take it? What did you do with it?" his listeners eagerly chimed in chorus.

"Did I take it? Of course I did."

"But what became of it?"

"As to what became of it, that is another matter. But I am sure I brought it home with me. I was taken by the title, for I had read when I was a boy the *Conquest of Mexico* by Bernal Diaz, one of the captains under Cortez, and here was the same story, told by the great captain himself. Yes, I brought it home with other books, and I believe that I read it, and now I certainly do remember something said about some mountain mines."

"O, Señor Augustino, cannot you recollect at all *what* was said; where they were located?"

"No; it was years ago, more than a score. But why wrangle here when the old book itself may be around to tell the story."

"It is not in your library," said John, "because I looked when you gave me permission to examine your collection of books."

"Let us ask the major-domo out there if he knows of any books lying about. Ho! Pedro!" The overseer hastened to his side. "Pedro, where are those old books we brought away from the convent, now twenty years ago?"

"*Maria Santissima*! most noble master; do you expect old Pedro to keep account of rubbish? And has not the cook been feeding the fires with them this twelvemonth past?"

"You rascal! Do you mean to say they are gone—all gone?"

"*Sin duda*, señor—without a doubt."

Don Augustino, however, took the young men with him to a room in a deserted wing of the great building.

"*Alla!* there!" said he, pointing to a heap of papers in a corner; "if it is yet alive, your book will be there."

The boys sprang at the musty pile. They pulled out, one after another, several large volumes of old religious works, which comprised all that were in a condition to be handled. They were turning away, disappointed, when the *haciendado* turned over a mouldy parchment-covered volume that had but half its leaves remaining. He stooped with an exclamation of joy: "Here, what is this? *Cartas de Cortez*, or my eyes deceive me. Shake the dust off and let's see!"

John and Juanito shouted, for it was the very volume that within the last few weeks they had so often wished to see.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIVER WITH GOLDEN SANDS.

Leaf by leaf, one fragment after another was exhumed from the dusty mass until the old book finally lay nearly complete on the floor before them.

"*Vamonos!* come back to the veranda, and let us examine the treasure," said the owner. "Don Juan, as you are versed in history, and we poor Mexicans are not, you shall read to us. But first, if you know, tell us something about these *Cartas*. Why were they written?"

"Of course, Don Augustino," said John, "you are acquainted with the history of your own country sufficiently to know that Cortez and his companions sailed along the Mexican coast, in 1519; and that he landed, and fought his way up to the Valley of Mexico, where, on an island in Lake Tezcoco, in the centre of the great valley, the Aztecs dwelt in their beautiful city of Tenochtitlan. They were numerous and powerful, and ruled by the great king, Montezuma, who received the Spaniards with pomp and magnificence, inviting them into the city, where they were entertained in the palace of Axaycatl, the king who had preceded Montezuma. He treated them like princes, and they requited his generosity by making him a prisoner, in his own city. An insurrection of his people followed, in which Montezuma was slain, and in which the Spaniards were expelled, with great slaughter. This was in 1520; in December of that year Cortez came back with reinforcements, invested the city and finally captured it, after completely destroying it and killing, it is estimated, nearly one hundred thousand Indians. While this siege and conquest was going on, at intervals of peace, Cortez wrote the famous *Letters*, which we have here. He wrote five, but we have only four, as the first is lost. The second is dated, October 15, 1520, and was printed in Spain, in Seville, October 8, 1522. The third letter was written in May, 1522, and printed the next year; while the fourth and last was written at the City of Mexico, in October, 1524, and printed in Octo-

ber, 1525. So you see they are very ancient, the oldest of them having been produced over three hundred and sixty years ago. Well," continued John, "it was with the events mentioned in his third letter, that Juanito and I have to do. In this he relates the capture of Montezuma, and the king's generosity in throwing open to them the treasure-chambers. All this golden treasure, the tribute of many provinces, the savings of royalty for generations, the Spaniards took; and they still clamored for more. Then Montezuma offered to show them whence came these golden stores."

Here John turned to the tattered old pages which related to the mines. Juanito was fascinated by the prospect of having his statements confirmed by Cortez. Don Augustino was hardly less interested. He himself was deeply excited:



"THIS SEEMS TO BE ALL OF IMPORTANCE," SAID JOHN.

When I discovered that Montezuma was fully devoted to your highness [he is writing to the King of Spain] I requested that he would point out to me the mines from which gold is obtained.

To this he consented with the greatest readiness, and immediately sent for several of his public servants and assigned them to four provinces, two to each province, in which he said the gold was obtained, and I deputed two Spaniards to accompany the same number of his own men.

One party of them went to a province called Cuzula, eighty leagues from the great city of Tenochtitlan, whose inhabitants are vassals of Montezuma, where they were shown three rivers, from all of which they brought me specimens of gold, of good quality. Another party of our envoys went to a province called Tamazulapa, which is

seventy leagues from the great city, but more towards the sea-coast. They brought me gold (rich gold) from a great river that passes through it. The other party visited a region beyond this river, inhabited by a people speaking a different language from those of Culna, and called *Tenis*; whose chief ruler is a powerful *cacique*. His territory is situated on a lofty and rugged mountain range, and his people, inured to war, fight with spears twenty-five to thirty-five palms in length. He is independent of Montezuma, and the messengers with the Spaniards did not dare enter this province until they had requested permission. The *cacique* answered that he was very willing the Spaniards should enter the province, but that the *Culnas* must not do so, as they were his enemies. The Spaniards at first feared to go; but finally went, and were well received by the chief and his people, who showed them seven or eight mines in which gold was extremely abundant, and they loaded the Spaniards with all the precious metal they could carry. And Montezuma caused to be painted, by his native artists, a chart of the country, painted on cloth, on which the coast was delineated, and a great river, called by the natives *Guazacualco*. The governor of this province of *Guazacualco*, sent messengers to me, by whom he transmitted jewels of gold, skins of tigers, feathers, and precious stones.

Here John paused, and turned over several pages.

"This seems to be all of importance relating to the mines; those we seek, I should judge, are in that province that was ruled over by the fierce *cacique*. He never allowed the Spaniards to return to the province, and these—probably the richest gold deposits in all Mexico—have ever since remained unknown to white men." He was addressing himself as much as his companions.

"And the question," said the Don, "is to find the exact locality in which dwelt that fierce *cacique*. Have you any clue?"

"I think," said John, refraining from any reference to Juanito's magic roll, "that we will first seek to reach the province of *Tamazulapa*, through which one of the golden-sanded streams flowed, and then try to work out the problem from the traditions of the Indians there."

Don Augustino smiled incredulously.

"We can do it," hotly asserted Juanito, "now that *señorito* has the story of the Indians and that of the great captain, and finds they fit together. But, Little Master, did you note what Captain Cortez says of the river we have sailed up, and the Province of *Guazacualco*? The governor of the province, as he calls him—he was a *king*—was the father of *Malinche*, and he was a friend of the fierce *cacique*. Little Master can

see the true traditions are with the people of that province, can he not?"

"Yes," interrupted the Don, "and part of his province is now covered by the *hacienda* of *Tuxtlas*, and I have heard that some of the *peones* there claim to be the descendants of that 'King' of *Guazacualco*, and descendants too of his daughter, *Malinche*." He spoke in a sneering tone, as though he had little belief in, and less sympathy for, any poor Indian *peon*.

Juanito's eyes flashed ominously, but he restrained his passion. He had refrained from any allusion to his own relationship with the Indian princess, and he now shot John a warning look, fearing, perhaps, he might betray the secret of his parentage.

"Well, my friends," said the *hacendado*, "you are welcome to the book; take it with you, and may it help you. Still don't pin too much your faith on travellers' tales and don't parley with the Indians. You insist upon going to-morrow? Yes? Good-night, then; I will have you called early. Good-night!"

The next morning saw them off at an early hour. The noble Don bade them final adieu, the "*carga mule*" took her place at the head of the line where it moved sedately along ahead of the horses, without either bit or bridle, and so their journey into the hills had begun. The little mule always leading the van, they filed away across the plain, finally losing sight of the *hacienda*, and entering the forests of the foothills.

A different scenery awaited them here, entirely tropical in character, where the rank vegetation of the lowlands resounded with the cries of parrots and trogons. Two or three leagues' ride through this luxuriant vegetation brought them to the banks of a dark and rapid-flowing river. This they had to ford. The current was swift, but their horses were good swimmers, and boldly plunged in, led by the *carga mule*, who seemed to spurn the water with her little hoofs. "Look at *Lorita*," said the *arriero*, admiringly, "she can do everything but talk; she is as bright as a parrot, and that is why I called her *Lorita*."

A dug-out floated here, on the other bank, and a long, peaked-roofed hut of grass stood at the edge of the forest. Dripping from their swim, the young horsemen presented themselves at the doorway and said *buenas días* to its inmates; but as the

men, half a dozen savage-looking Mestizos, were in a high state of intoxication, they did not stop. They rode on farther, and then halted at a curve of the stream and tied their horses. Taking a small shallow pan from the saddle-bag, John waded into the stream and dipped up some sand. Juanito watched approvingly: "You are right, *señorito*, this *rio* flows direct from the golden country; if we find gold in these sands, then we know we must find gold at its head."

John came up on the bank and whirled the pan around swiftly, pouring out the larger particles of gravel, little by little, and dipping up fresh quantities of water, until only the finest of the sand remained in the dish. The boys both bent over it anxiously; then carefully John whirled it again with a peculiar motion, again throwing out the water and lightest sand, till but a minute portion was left in the pan. It needed only a glance this time to detect numerous glittering particles, yellow and sparkling! John's face was radiant. Juanito, forgetting his usual caution, exclaimed outright:

"*Es oro!* — It is the yellow gold!"

"It's onward now," said John, and with light hearts they mounted their horses and rode away.

By and by they crossed the margin of the low country, the *tierra caliente*, and now they entered a cooler region, and higher, the *tierra templada*, or temperate zone. Here vegetation differed again, and they rode through beautiful groves of oak, always climbing higher and higher.

So the days of their journey sped, a tropic panorama of forest and jungle and cliff, broken by sudden showers, and varied by glimpses of uninhabited villages, and by nights in decaying and deserted cabins. And now they had come to a region where John was constantly upon the alert, dismounting and making long forays into vales and up heights, often consulting the old volume of Cortez's *Letters* which they had found at the *hacienda*. From its pages he knew that if they were upon the right trail, there should be somewhere in this vicinity the traces of a ruined fort; and at last one day they did find a small section of broken wall — that and nothing more. But from that moment John felt confident. "Without doubt,"

he declared to Juanito, "we are on the border-land of the fierce Chinantecos, those strange savages who met the messengers of Montezuma with gigantic spears and so barred the entrance to their territory, though they allowed the Spaniards to go through, and showed them such treasures of gold as have never been discovered since."

"And the golden-sanded river," broke in Juanito, "has its rise in this very region. I have heard my mother say so, and I hope *señorito* is not going to abandon it entirely. Little Master knows there is gold in the river."

"Never fear, *chiquito*," said John playfully, "we can return; but let us first find the greater treasure beyond."

That afternoon another black storm-cloud burst over them drenching them quickly, and making the clayey trail precarious footing. Just as the cloud discharged upon them its huge volume of water they were nearing the brink of a ravine which they must descend, and then climb the opposite bank before reaching the village beyond, which they could see — their destination for the night. The descent could only be made over some thirty steps hewn out of the solid rock of the precipice. *Lorita* (the *carga* mule) descended jauntily, until half-way down, when she suddenly halted, sniffed suspiciously at the step ahead of her, and tried to re-ascend. The rocky pathway was wide enough for but one beast, and they were descending single file. By the mule's action they were crowded back and the horses, frightened, began to prance about. "*Hola, mula!*" shouted the *arriero*, "*anda!* — go on!"

But "*mula*" refused to go, and pushed back against Juanito's mare, who raised herself on her hind feet and came down against the poor creature with such force as to topple her over the cliff! A cry of horror rose — for the wall below appeared a sheer descent — hushed at once, as Juanito's horse backed her hind feet over the wall, fell, recovered herself, and hung, by her fore-feet only, clinging against the escarpment. Even the trained steed rode by John felt the horror of the occasion and seemed determined to follow after its companion.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES.

BY FRED A. OBER.

(Author of "The Silver City.")

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAIL THROUGH INDIAN LAND.

THE *arriero* was safe because he was in the rear; fortunately, too, he had a cool head. He at once uncoiled the *riata*—the lasso—carried over his shoulders, and threw it down to Juanito, who caught it. Passing the other end around the trunk of a tree growing on the bank above, the *arriero* then signalled the boy to cast himself loose from the saddle. This he did, firmly grasping the noose of the *riata*, and the agile *arriero* drew him easily over the brink and up back to the ledge.

Meanwhile, John's horse was uneasily pacing the narrow ridge, in imminent danger of shying over the precipice; but the *arriero* slipped by her, grasped her bridle, and conducted horse and rider down the path to a broader shelf. John then slipped from the saddle and ran back to the aid of Juanito, who was holding the head of his mare, and encouraging her with soothing murmurs. The ever-present lasso hung from the horn of the saddle; reaching it, John uncoiled it and got it around the tree above. Joining together the two other *riatas*, these were swung in the form of an immense loop under the quarters of the horse, and one end also attached to the tree. Then, with John at the other, the *arriero* hauling at the line fastened to the saddle, and Juanito at the horse's head, the grand effort was made. The creature seemed to understand every word, every motion, and looked beseechingly into her owner's eyes, as though to ask him to hurry as her feet were slipping and her limbs trembling with the strain.

"Now, *Bonita!*" whispered Juanito in her ear. "Up!"

"All together!" shouted John.

"*Anda!*" cried the *arriero*. The mare herself made a mighty effort, her hoof smiting against the cliff and striking fire from its flinty surface; the young men strained every nerve and muscle at

the ropes, and in another minute the little beauty stood upon the ledge, trembling, reeking with perspiration, yet safe.

Juanito loosened the saddle-girths and led her down to the bed of the ravine, where the white mare received her with a grateful neigh of recognition. Leaving him to care for the horses, John and the *mulero* threaded their way back down to the point where the mule had fallen, expecting to discover its mangled remains. They reached the place where she must have struck, in her descent, some ten feet below the trail, but there was no sign of her there—only a little hair upon the edge of a boulder and a streak of blood here and there. They looked at each other in amazement. The *mulero* raised his tattered hat and scratched his head. "Señor," he said, in awe-stricken tones, "do you think anything has flown away with *mulita?*" He gazed up in the air, as though expecting to find her sailing towards the sky; but John looked farther down the slope, and there saw the recreant *mulita* placidly nibbling the leaves of the bushes, which had partially concealed her. The *arriero* was almost crazy with delight, darting at the little beast and hugging her round the neck, while she poured into his ears a most dolorous bray.

John was surprised to discover the *carga* undisturbed by the fall, though the mule must have landed upon it in her fall from the cliff; but the *arriero* resented any imputation that anything terrestrial could have disturbed a *carga* of his packing, anyway. Nothing but omnipotent force, he declared, could detach that bale of luggage from the mule, without first cutting the girths. With great difficulty they extricated the mule from her perilous position, and after a long delay joined Juanito at the brookbed.

Without further adventure, they reached the village ahead of them, just before dark, and arrived before the door of the *casa municipal*, or town-house, in a dripping condition. This was the first inhabited Indian village they had entered.

They found but one white man in it — the shrewdest *gente de razon* they had yet met. This Mexican term means a “man of reason,” of intelligence, and is applied by the Indians exclusively to white men, and is a relic of the days of Spanish dominion. So, when John rode up to the door of the *casa* and inquired if there were any *gente de razon* in the place, he was instantly understood by the assembled Indians as asking for a white man, and several of them instantly replied, “*Si, señor, uno solo* — Yes, sir, one only.”

“Then I would see him,” he said, thanking them for the information, and they hastened in to acquaint their “man of reason” of the arrival of strangers. It seemed to be a noteworthy event, this visit of a white man to their village, and many scores of Indians came crowding around. They appeared to be moved by curiosity only, and were polite and attentive to his requests and wants.

When the only “reasonable man” of the region appeared, he proved to be a very hospitable one and at once invited them to dismount, directing the *mulero* to take off the saddles and packs, and pile them up on his veranda, and asked them into the house. When he heard of the trail they had come over, and the country they had ridden through, he declared his wonder and admiration in hearty terms. He proved indeed to be the jolliest of hosts, a man given to politics, holding an office under the Mexican government — that of *jefe politico* — or political chief, of the district. It somehow transpired what the young men’s mission was, and the worthy man appeared greatly concerned for their safety, repeatedly warning them against going farther into the country of the Tamazulapans — the Indians who guarded the secret of the ancient mines.

He readily admitted that the mines existed and were in that region, for he had heard so all his life long; but he added that from generation to generation the inhabitants of that tract had sworn to defend the secret with their lives; they had a hundred rifles with which a band of trained men weekly drilled. “They have sworn eternal enmity to all miners,” said he, “because they have heard what ruin and destruction miners have brought upon other regions. And their traditions tell them that all the troubles of their race came from disclosing to strangers the secrets of their wealth.”

Mentally acquiescing in the wisdom of the

Indians, in thus keeping foreigners out of their gold-fields, John yet laughingly declared that he should not think of abandoning the search until the armed men resisted his entrance into the territory.

The travellers again took to the saddle, next morning, leaving their host uttering many a dismal prediction. Their trail now led over hills and mountains. They were entering into the country of the *Serranos* — the mountaineers — descendants of a long line of unconquered ancestors, a people who long resisted the encroachments of Montezuma and his Aztecs, and had beaten back the soldiers of Cortez himself. All these hills were inhabited; the crests and ridges were covered with majestic oak-trees and their sides with rich gardens.

They zigzagged up and down narrow trails for days, crossing many streams, and riding through several villages buried in seas of verdure, in the last of which, a little town called Comaltepec, they met with a great surprise — a great surprise, produced by a very little man. As they were riding through the pleasant lanes between gardens walled in with rocks and enclosed by hedges of the *organo*, or organ cactus, a grotesque figure rose up out of the road.

“*Hola!*” whispered Juanito to John, “there’s the owner of Ocote *rancho*, the old rascal in whose hut we slept last night.”

“So it is!” said John, “but how did he get out here, three or four leagues from his *rancho*, ahead of us, when we started at daylight?”

“Oh, any Mexican knows side-trails and short cuts; trust him for that, in his own country.”

The owner of Ocote *rancho* was a most comically-ferocious old man, not over five feet high, and about sixty years old. He was so short and “stubby” that he might have been taken for a boy, had it not been for his gray hair (which was pulled over his eyes) and his bristly beard. The hair hid almost the whole of his face, and through it twinkled a pair of beady black eyes. On his head he wore a broad sombrero, nearly three feet wide; and the rest of his garb consisted of a cotton shirt, a pair of wide cotton trousers, and rude leather sandals kept in place by thongs passing between his toes and fastened around his bare ankles. A very broad leather belt girt his waist, and in this were stuck a huge knife and an

immense revolver; both weapons so large that they arrested the attention at once, and gave him the appearance of a bandit.

He had planted himself directly in the path. There was nothing to do but halt. He grinned with malicious glee, and held out his hand, which the travellers shook, perforce, in turn. He beckoned them to follow, and led the way to a little *adobe* house on a hillside, in which, to their astonishment, they beheld a forge and implements for smelting metals. From some mysterious hid-

his head knowingly, and said one word: "*Oro!*"

"Yes, I see it is gold. But where did you get it?"

The little bandit pointed to the silver and exclaimed: "*Plata!*"

John handed the specimens back, spoke to Juanito, and moved towards the door. But the *ranchero* darted forward and planted himself in their way.

"*Para!*—Hold! Has *el caballero* ever heard of the mountain-mines of Montezuma—the great king? Let *el caballero* bethink himself."



"ORO!" SAID THE OLD RANCHERO.

ing-place he brought out some nuggets of gold and some specimens of silver in solid bars. These he placed in John's hands, and then stood peering through his bushy hair into the young man's face as he examined them.

John was inwardly agitated, over this virgin gold, probably from the hill-mines of his search, but he studied a calm demeanor, weighted the gold carelessly, and as carelessly inquired where it came from.

The old *ranchero* had not yet spoken, but he now opened his mouth, pointed to the gold, wagged

John assented by a nod, outwardly undisturbed. The bandit seemed to bore into him with his little gimlet eyes, for an instant. Then he whispered huskily: "This gold came from that mine. *Si! es el oro sacro*—the sacred gold!"

The effect upon *el caballero* was not, evidently, what he had hoped. He went on: "*El caballero* has heard of that mine? He is even now in search of it? Yes? But he knows not where it is. I know. I can conduct *el señor*."

John consulted with Juanito as to what they had better do; treat with the man, or leave him.

"He is a rascal," said Juanito; "but he *may* have knowledge *señorito* could use for our good. Let him go with us, and I will watch the wizard for Little Master."

When the *ranchero* had secured their attention, he became voluble and told them why he had followed after them, and why he had intercepted them.

"After the *señores* had left my *ranchito*, I asked myself why strangers—and white men—should visit this country; for not in years have I seen one here before. And in a dream of the morning it came to me that the *caballeros* were searching for the Aztec mines; and I rose at once and saddled my *burro* and reached my town-house ahead of the gentlemen. And here I am, sent, as they can see, by *Dios* through the medium of a dream, to guide them on their journey."

"That being the case," remarked John, "the sooner we go the better."

In a short time the Mexican had drawn out and saddled his donkey, strapped a pair of enormous spurs to his bare heels, and was leading the way. He was more comical than before, mounted on his *burro*, for the little beast scarcely lifted the Don's feet clear of the ground, and in order to make her move faster than the horses he kept his bare legs, with their huge spurs, in constant motion against her sides, his arms tossing in corresponding motion. He now and then checked their flapping to communicate some item of information and to strengthen the impression that he had been supernaturally sent to guide them to the lost mines. He finally confided to them that in addition to his dream, the oracle, the old Indian squaw at Iztlán, had told him only two days before that two noble young men were on the way to bring him a fortune. And the fortune-teller of Iztlán never made a mistake! "Señor," he eagerly cried, stopping his donkey so suddenly that John's horse nearly walked over him, "señor, I am the only one in this region, with another, who knows of the existence of these mines! For forty years, I have carried the secret; I could not trust my countrymen; but *el Americano* I know I can trust; he shall be told everything. Even the governor came here, with a company of soldiers, seeking the mine; but he went away with nothing. The friend who gave me the secret brought from the mine a burro-load of gold; yes, much as his donkey could

bear; though he was killed by the mountain Indians who followed and sought him out. I alone am left. I alone have the golden secret."

Then he rode on again, still flapping his arms like a windmill and his heels in constant motion.

Towards evening time they reached the verge of the plateau on which they had been riding. Here they saw a terrible trail leading down the steep sides of red sandstone cliffs, to a green and quiet valley, through which a yellow river roared. "*Alla!*—there!" said the Don, halting at the brink, "is the entrance to the land of the treasure; behold the river with the yellow sands!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INDIAN TOWN IN TIERRA CALIENTE.

It was, indeed, a *terrible* trail that led down into the valley, twisting about and doubling upon itself along the sides of cliffs and over rocks and fallen trees. But it gave them access into the heart of *tierra caliente*, into the very centre of sun-land, the vast and perpendicular cliffs of sandstone walling it in.

Once down, and fording the tumultuous river, Don Tomaso, the *ranchero*, led them to a broad field, in which some Indians were at work, ploughing the soil with a crooked stick. They all wore a simple costume of cotton *camisa* and *pañalones*, and a hat; but one of their number Don Tomaso addressed as *el presidente*, and to him explained that the strangers had come to pay him a visit of respect, having heard of his bounty and the great attractions of his town when in the City of Mexico.

Courteously acknowledging this honor, the president at once abandoned the plough to the patient oxen, and with simple dignity led the way to the village, which slumbered in a grove of tropical trees. Not a house was visible until they had entered the grove; then the thatched huts appeared, made of poles plastered with mud; lowly dwellings, but neat and clean. Orange trees, yellow with fruit, great walnut trees, and others purple with plums, completely sheltered this little village from observation.

They were taken direct to the *casa real*, the *cabildo*, the house provided by the people for the entertainment of travellers. The *alcalde*, the chief of the village, was summoned to usher them into

it with becoming ceremony. The *alcalde* came with silver-tipped staff carried before him, saluted the strangers in the name of his townfolk, produced an immense key, opened the door, and bade them welcome to the hospitalities of Tamazulapa. The *casa real* did not prove an attractive house; its walls were damp and mouldy, and its thatch swarming with centipedes, tarantulas and lizards, so long had it been since strangers had occupied it before. But it was the house of state and it had



JUANITO HAD HIM DOWN ON HIS KNEES.

two windows, which was more than any of the huts could boast.

Women came, and brushed and dusted the furniture (consisting of a table and two benches) and swept the clay floor until it was clean. Then the principal men arrived, with presents of fruit, fowls and eggs. The children (lovely girls and boys of dusky hue) peered slyly around the trunks of the trees, or corners of the houses. The saddles and the packs were piled up in a corner, their animals led away to pasture, and then the young men were left in entire possession of the *cabildo*, as completely as though it had been theirs from the beginning of time. They unstrapped their revolvers and hung them above their carbines in the corner.

"It doesn't appear as though these men were going to attack us," quietly remarked John, as he removed his heavy spurs from his tired feet, and flung himself into the hammock their *arriero* had stretched beneath the trees.

"No," answered Juanito; "these are honest men."

"Have a care, *señores*, I say," said Don Tomaso; "have a care for your rifles and revolvers; they have your horses; we cannot get away; there is but the one trail out of the valley. What will you do if they come upon you with their trained soldiers? While they believe you friends of mine, all is well. But let your errand be known and"—he drew his hand rapidly across his throat, and threw up his arms, like a man struck by a bullet. "You are safe because you are *my* friends, *señores*."

Juanito shrugged his shoulders quietly; but Don Tomaso saw the motion, sprang to his feet, and plunged forward, snapping his fingers in the boy's face. "*Perillo!*" he hissed. "Dog of an Indian! What know you of these people?"

Juanito sprang at him with the swiftness of a bow suddenly unbent, and had him at once by the throat and forced down upon his knees, before John could interpose. Don Tomaso was fumbling at his belt for his knife. John reached them with a bound, laid one hand on Don Tomaso's right arm, and the other on Juanito's choking hand. "What folly, *amigo!*" he said in the ear of the boy who at once loosed his hold, excited as he was. The separated combatants glared vindictively at each other, without a word; then each returned to his seat; but John was troubled, for he knew that a desperate conflict between them was inevitable. "I should have shaken off the old Mexican!" he impatiently reflected. "It was a false move, and I fear a fatal one."

At dusk, when they could retreat to a quiet spot, unobserved, the young men talked it over. John spared his reproaches, knowing it would have been as impossible to stay a cyclone as the wrath of a Mexican who had received such an insult. The question was how to prevent another collision. Juanito, after a long silence, promised to avoid conversation with their badly-chosen guide. "I am sorry," he added, "if Juanito has made trouble for the Little Master. But *señorito* must understand that Tomaso is determined to kill Juanito and it matters not what means he takes.

Juanito will avoid him all he can; but if a fight comes — then the *señorito* must chose whether Tomaso must die or Juanito." He looked into John's eyes mournfully, almost reproachfully, then continued: "Juanito is not afraid to die; but what will then become of *señorito*?"

"Nonsense, my boy," cried John, "neither of you must die. Avoid him; help me plan to dismiss him."

Contrary to John's fears, the two Mexicans next morning seemed to have utterly forgotten their quarrel, and he gave himself up to the pleasure of studying this new and peaceful tribe of Indians for a few days. It seemed to him that they did little else than dance and sing, in pleasant weather, and cultivate their gardens when the rain came down. So far as their religion went, they might have been classed as pagans, for they clung far more closely to the ancient rites of the sun-worship than to the forms taught them by the Romish priests of later times. They had the remains of a church, it is true, and said certain prayers, and observed many feast-days. They were irreproachable in their conduct to one another, loving their neighbors as themselves. They were at first shy of their stranger-guests, especially were the children shy; their modesty was a charm that gave grace to all their actions. In song and dance they were very graceful and pleasing, having sweet voices and lithe limbs well trained.

On the first Sunday of their stay occurred the grand sun-dance. The oldest men formed themselves in procession, with their faces painted in various colors and startling figures, and carrying in their hands fans of turkey-feathers, in the brightest dyes. Some of them wore masks, and were most hideous to look upon, and all had on the curious garments worn by their ancestors in most ancient times. A tall flag-staff was borne in front from which fluttered a banner, brightly painted with the great smiling face of the sun.

After marching through all the village, receiving offerings of drinks and fruits from every house, they assembled in the *plazita* — the little square in front of the *cabildo* — and formed around their banner. Their chief men then harangued them upon the religion of their forefathers, telling them that the first deity was a being unseen, whom they could not approach; but who took pity on his poor chil-

dren of earth and sent them the sun, as his visible presence, ever shining in the sky by day, and resting only at night. Hence, though the priests had since told them of a different god, of an ever-living presence, who had once manifested himself in human shape, yet they should offer their tribute yearly to the first conception of their forefathers, and should teach to their children the true godship of the sun, a deity appointed to their race by the First and Invisible God.

This chieftain was distinguished by a high crown of turkey-feathers, which made his dusky features appear even darker. After he had chanted a long song in their native tongue, his followers replied reverently, and then the music struck up, in weird strains, and they danced furiously, shaking their fans and their rattles of tortoise-shell to and fro, but all moving, swift or slow, in perfect tune.

Nearly an hour was devoted to dance and song. Then, at a signal, they suddenly stopped, gathered about the banner, and gazed upon the sun-image with looks of adoration. A dance of sorrow or supplication followed; then the dance of joy, after which the flag was furled, and the day was spent in visits and feasts.

During the week following, Tomaso led them out on three fruitless searches into the hills. In John's opinion he seemed to be feeling his way, rather than trying to show them paths and localities of which he had certain knowledge, and one evening as they sat together in the hut, reading by candle-light, he intimated this to Juanito. The Indian lad was jubilant: "Then *señorito* no longer has *any* faith in *el ladronito* the little robber, eh? Well, has he lost faith in Juanito? No? If that is so, to-morrow let Juanito again lead the search."

Don Tomaso's shock of hair appeared in the doorway, at this moment, and through it glittered his little black eyes; he had evidently overheard a portion, at least, of the conversation. "Ah, it is not true, then, is it," sneered he, "that gold was found in the river-sands? And the great *capitan* did not learn from Montezuma of rich mines near Tamazulapa? And I am a robber? But gold *is* here, nevertheless—in the hills, in a pit, reached only through long galleries. *Es verdad*; but I — and I alone — know of the entrance to those galleries. I will show you, Don Juan; you will see, Don Juan."

The candle was spluttering in its socket, but

dimly lighting the room; all the Indians had retired to their houses, long since; so they sought their hammocks. But both John and Juanito in the darkness buckled about them their belts, containing their revolvers and knives, outside their

serapes. They exchanged no words, but each of the young men felt a new dread of their guide. However, from Don Tomaso's hammock soon came the sound of regular snoring, and they at last dropped asleep.

GRANDPAPA'S POCKETS.

Margaret Bytunge



OH! such wonderful, wonderful pockets
As grandpapa's never were known;

They're as lean as can be in the morning,
But at nightfall so plump they have grown
That they're ready to burst, for packed in them
Is many a game and a toy,
With candies and cakes for the girlies
And lots of the same for the boy.
And oranges, apples, and cherries;
Bananas, and peaches, and berries,
Balls, marbles, and beautiful dollies,
Mimic kittens, and monkeys, and pollies —
Yes, and even torpedoes and rockets
Have been found in these wonderful pockets,
Grandpapa's pockets.

Oh! such wonderful, wonderful pockets!
Like stockings at Christmas are they;
But there's only one night for the stockings
And these — why, they're filled every day!
And oh! how the rosy cheeks dimple
With smiles that are loving and bright,
As the dear old man's spied in the distance
And welcomed with shrieks of delight.
For sets of the prettiest dishes
On which to serve dinners delicious,
And cunning wee sofas and tables,
And books filled with jingles and fables,
And finger-rings, bracelets, and lockets
Have been found in these wonderful pockets,
Grandpapa's pockets.

MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES.

BY FRED A. OBER.

(Author of "The Silver City.")

CHAPTER IX.

A TIGER CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

JOHN'S rest was broken, hours later, by a dull thud, as of some one thrown violently to the floor. This sound was followed by a tumult of scuffling, hard breathing, and half-suppressed cries of pain. He reached over to Juanito's hammock—it was empty! With swift consciousness that help was needed he sprang up and flashed his light. He saw two forms writhing on the floor.

It was an inspiration truly, that had suggested to him the lighting of their dark lantern, to place out of sight in a corner; he had done this while Tomaso was in the corral, before the hammocks were swung.

Instantly, now, as he leaped to the floor, he illuminated the space in front of him brightly, and he was relieved to find Tomaso was underneath; one arm only free. Juanito was crouched upon his breast, like a young tiger-cat, one knee against his left arm, and striving to secure his right hand, and its murderous *cuchillo*—the broad-bladed knife usually worn in the belt. The sudden light enabled him to fasten upon it, and then the little giant was pinned securely to the floor. He looked like a vicious, human embodiment of a tarantula—a grizzly, hairy spider—as he lay there with limbs outstretched, and glowering upon his captor through his shock of hair. His revolver was still sticking from his belt, and John drew it out. "Now what shall we do with him?" said he to Juanito. It was a puzzling situation, surely. They knew not what disposition to make of him. "The knives, carbines, revolvers—secure them, Little Master," said Juanito, still holding Tomaso fast.

This done, the agile lad leaped up, clear of the bandit, at a bound, and leaving him free. Tomaso was on his feet in an instant. He darted swiftly at the table. But John, seizing his shoulder, pulled him back and spun him into his own corner, where he crouched like an ocelot—an Aztec tiger—his

small, black, wicked eyes following every motion.

The young men had no speech in common save Spanish. This tongue Tomaso also understood, and they could not consult. But on one thing they were settled without speech—their enemy must be watched; and through the slow-moving hours of the night, they sat up and kept him in the light of the lantern, weapons in reach. Tomaso never stirred from his crouching position in the corner; not even when daylight began to struggle through the chinks in the walls, and Juanito, opening the door, went in search of the *alcalde*. He was still in his corner, like a sulky spider, when Juanito returned, with the *alcalde*, *presidente*, and other chief men of the village.

But as they entered, Tomaso leaped for the door. He was forced back by two strong Indians, and they, under the directions of the *alcalde*, dragged him off to the *calaboza*.

Then, gathering in conclave under the spreading branches of a tamarind-tree, with sentinels out to keep off intruders, the village officials invited the strangers to tell their story.

"It is a serious thing," began the *alcalde*, with dignity and simplicity, "a serious thing to place one in the *calaboza* who has claimed our hospitality. Still we have protected you. Now we must know what this man has done."

"Certainly, señor," answered John. "It is your right. The man simply sought our lives." But Juanito narrated the events of the night. He himself came of Indian stock, and he was speaking to Indians; accordingly he wasted no words. His account was succinct: "*Señores*, we retired late. My friend slept. I, suspicious of the heavily-breathing Tomaso, remained awake. An hour passed. Two hours. My eyes were open. The heavy breathing ceased. I heard other sounds. Tomaso left his hammock. He crept softly towards us. He came under my hammock. I expected to feel his knife searching for me. But he crept on. Beneath *señorito's* hammock he halted. I sprang. The rest you know."

There was a general stir of assent through the circle. "Without a doubt, he intended to kill the white stranger — *el blanco*; but why?" They waited for the reason.

Juanito hesitated. He would have consulted with John, since the assigning of the reason involved the disclosure of their secret. He looked inquiringly at the Little Master. He, divining his thoughts, nodded approval.

Juanito went on: "*Señores*, the reason is this: *Señorito*, my friend and master, has learned, from a wonderful book written by the great *Capitan*, Don Fernando Cortés, that there exists in these mountains, golden treasure" —

He stopped, for the usually stolid Indians showed intense excitement. They rose. Whispering together, they glanced at the young stranger with anything but good-will expressed in their looks.

"Go on," said the *alcalde* at last.

"That is all," proceeded Juanito. "Our presence here so near the secret mines surely explains our purpose."

"But Tomaso — why should he take your lives?"

"Tomaso met us, at Comaltepec, showed us gold; said he could guide us to the ancient mine, and joined us. I doubt now his knowledge. But he listened last night to the reading from *El Capitan's* account. Now he knows all that we know. That being so —"

He halted again. A flash of intuition told John the conclusion of that unfinished sentence. "That being so," John himself hurriedly said, "he had all our secret. He needed us no longer. Why should he share the gold with us? He could penetrate more safely and surely without us than with us. So he would kill us."

At this point some unexpected testimony was offered, throwing a new light upon Tomaso's actions. An old Indian rose — one of the influential personages of the town. "The gold," said he, "which this Tomaso had — that which he showed the strangers — know ye whence it came? *It was mine!* Once, many years ago, I carried gold to him; he was a silversmith, at Imulco. He kept my gold. He tried to force me to tell whence I got it. More than this — he stole the pieces I placed before the Blessed Virgin, which I took to her, with prayers that she would bless my venture. He stole them, and I had not heart to work, because the Holy Virgin had been defrauded of her por-

tion. But I refused to show him the mine. He knows naught of the mine. Forty years, it was, ago. I have done." He sat down and drew his serape about him.

Yet what should these peaceful men do with Tomaso? They were in as great perplexity as were the young strangers a few hours before. Keep him in the calaboose a period and then send him out of the valley, with a warning never to return, as he valued his life. That was the final decision.

But the more important question concerned the young strangers. It was demanded of John and Juanito that they should not depart by stealth. Then the council adjourned for breakfast, for it was late; smokes were curling all around them, and savory odors greeted the young men as, silent, they returned to the *cabildo*.

At noon they were summoned. The discussion among the Tamazulapans was dignified, but grave and earnest. The solemn tone of it convinced John that these Indians were indeed the custodians of the historic mines. Should they allow these strangers to go farther, the presidente asked.

"They are not like the Spaniards, truly," mildly urged the *alcalde*; "yet," added he, in a deepening tone, "they are white men. Other white men will certainly follow after these, should they reach the King's Treasure. That smoke, ascending into the upper air, tells to dwellers upon the hills that we have here a fire; no less certainly will the visits of white men here proclaim to all the world that they have found gold! Who does not remember the sufferings of the people when the Spaniards came through the land in search of money? What should *we* gain? Now, we have enough for our wants; the ground gives us all we need, and all are happy. Of what use is gold to us? We neither buy nor sell. Of what good will be the coming of many men, to dig pits in our farms and spoil the water of our streams?"

The presidente, in a long, serious speech, agreed with the *alcalde* that it would be wisdom to keep the secret of the mine buried as deep as its deepest pit was dug. "Yet," he added, looking compassionately upon his protégés, "these young men have come many, many miles to learn of this treasure; one of them has sailed the wide ocean (which none of us have ever seen); they have come in *canoas* up the dark river, Coatzacoalcos; have

crossed the savannas, and forced their horses over the rough trails of the Sierras. Brave men are they. Others have come here, truly; but how? The *gobernador* came, with files of soldiers, and demanded of us our gold; but we fled to the hills and he marched home at last with nothing as his reward. Chatto — the flat-nose — came also; his fate ye all know! Like him perish all robbers! But these come in peace. My eyes have seen none like these before. *Their* eyes are clear.

Clearly he had understood every word of their discussion. Every face was turned to him. Alarm, curiosity, interest, together with a strange look of kinship, moulded the expression of all.

"It is no slight favor we would ask of you," continued Juanito, "yet you will grant it; if it were ten times as great, ye would grant it! We seek the old mines, but not alone for our own advantage. We are willing to yield you a revenue from our labors. We wish to be of benefit to you.



JUANITO SHOWS THE TOTEM OF THE LORD OF THE HILLS.

Their voices are kind. Would that the young men of our people were as they."

There was a buzz of approbation; and the *alcalde*, seeing that the majority present appeared likely to favor the strangers, shrewdly moved to again adjourn. This they were about to do when Juanito rose and asked their attention for a moment, and the *alcalde* granted him a hearing.

"Friends and brothers," began the boy in a tongue quite unknown to John. But a visible thrill of emotion ran through the assemblage. He was speaking in Zapotec, their own language. This was their first intimation of his knowledge of it.

But you will grant what we ask, because I ask it — and for no other reason."

Then Juanito drew his right hand from its hiding-place in his breast, and spread it out, palm towards them.

Instantly, to John's surprise, although he was expecting some surprising development to be brought about by Juanito, from his air and impressive tone, every member of the group bowed his head and touched his forehead; a murmur ran around: "Coatelicamar! Coatelicamar!"

"Need I tell you, friends," continued the young Indian, still in Zapotec, "that I am descended from

Malinche ; that from her, through long lines of ancestors, I received into my keeping this totem I now display before you ?”

“We know now that you are one of us,” returned the *alcalde*, “even though your tribe be now far separated from us.

“But it is a great thing you ask of us ; it is a thing no man yet has wrested from us. Through long years of poverty, though tempted by the offers of riches, we have kept the secret of the mines. Tribute in the name of Malinche has never been exacted. If you command, in the name of the great princess, Malinche, we must comply ; but withdraw the totem and reflect upon the consequences to our tribe. Here, before you, are old men and young ; yonder are our wives and children ; in peace and happiness we dwell here ; in peace and happiness we may continue to dwell, unless the gold-seeking miners come. Then we shall pass from our homes, wanderers in the wild lands, no more to be gathered together.”

“That, surely, we should not desire,” returned Juanito ; “you say truly, that I am one of you ! I speak your language ; the blood of the Zapoteca flows in my veins. Yet, while you are free my family is in peonage ; yes, held as slaves — even my mother, my brother, and sister. To free them, to bring them back to join their kindred, I must have gold, much gold. This I need — enough to pay their ransom ; the rest I care not for, I would stay and dwell with you. My friend too has great deeds to do with gold.”

“How much require you for the ransom ?” asked the *presidente*.

Juanito told the sum ; it was great, because the inherited debt had accumulated through years and years.

“I doubt if there be so much in all the village,” said the *alcalde*.

He whispered to the old men, and they silently separated, each going to his own division of the village, and soon there was an outgoing of women, children, and older people. Each one brought something and deposited it upon a blanket, in the *plazita*. Upon their faces were glad smiles, for they had been told to bring all the money they possessed to redeem one of their own race from peonage ; and they rejoiced in the noble deed. The chief man counted the little heaps upon the blanket. “Is there no more ?” he said.

“No more ! It is all our houses held !” The *presidente* sighed : “Alas ! there is not half enough ! Take back, O, my people, your treasures. The strangers must go to the mine. But let us wait through the night.”

CHAPTER X.

AT THE MINE'S MOUTH.

It was their first peaceful night in the Indian village, their first opportunity for unrestrained conversation.

With a sense of happy security, they sat by their lamp. “It is a question,” John declared to Juanito, “whether or not we ought to persist in our search, for if these people oppose it they certainly have the best of reasons. To go on is an awful responsibility. But what was it you said to them, Juanito ; what did you show them, that changed at once their attitude of defiance to one of supplication ?”

Juanito had not revealed to him what it was that he had held in his hand and displayed to the Indians.

“Does the *señorito* remember our conversation, the first day we spoke of the mines ?”

“Yes ; you said you held a powerful means in reserve. But of course I had no idea of what it was.”

“No. Juanito does not let all of himself be known at once.”

“But what is it ?”

“Has the *señorito* ever heard of the tribute-book of Montezuma ?”

Señorito had heard of a tribute-book.

“He knows that in it are all the records of the many treasures sent to the great king ?”

John shook his head.

“*Piel de tigre* (tiger skins) *copalli* (copal), gold, as well as rich feathers and precious stones,” went on Juanito. “The name of the people who sent them with each. And the totems of each Pueblo. The *señorito* knows,” pursued the imperturbable Juanito, “that I am descended from Malinche, Princess of Coatzacoalcos. Malinche, when Don Fernando Cortés went to Spain, came back to her own country. She was rich in land ; but had gold paid as tribute to her by the Indians. Every month, she sent her servants into the hills, and they came back with it.”

"And what has all this to do with us?" asked John as Juanito paused.

"Much! *Señorito*, those servants, to get that gold, had to take to these hill-people the totem of the lord of the hills, which he had given Malinche; Coatellicamar—lord of the hills."

"Still, I am in the dark."

"Malinche died; the totem fell to her daughter, whose descendant I am."

A light broke upon the American at these words: "And it is that totem which you have?"

"Juanito has that totem!"

He drew forth from under his *camisa*, where it had hung around his neck, that little bag which John had seen on the coast, and from it extracted a piece of wrinkled parchment. Smoothing it out, he displayed to John's wondering eyes the cherished totem—a prostrate serpent with two curious figures upon its back.

"There is no doubt," said John, after carefully studying it, "this is the totem of Coatellicamar."

"It fixes, too, beyond a doubt, the exact location of the mine," said Juanito. "And now the *señorito* knows all Juanito knows about it. Will *señorito* give up the search now?"

"No. My curiosity is more excited than ever. We will discover the mines, even if we have to retrace our steps and follow up the course of the river with the golden sands. We can then accomplish our purpose without disturbing our friends here, who will certainly not lose anything by our discovery, if they never gain."

With this resolve, they lay down to sleep. A surprise awaited them in the morning. As they opened their door, the *alcalde* and two others stood before it. They saluted them with respect, but waited till they had performed their ablutions and had breakfasted, before they announced their errand: "*Señores*, we will show you the mine!"

John thanked them, and they told him that two young men would go with them, next morning, to conduct them straight to the ancient shafts. But they wished to stipulate that they should not reveal to other white men the location. This John refused to promise.

"Then," said the *alcalde*, "our young men shall not guide you. You may go and seek for yourselves; for how know we that the totem of Malinche was not gained by force, even by fraud?"

John laid a restraining hand upon the arm of Ma-

linche's descendant. "So be it," he said. "On you must rest the responsibility of disobedience to the old tribal mandate. We will go without your protection, for go we will."

The *alcalde* was visibly shaken. But he replied only: "Beware, however, of the people there; the descendants of the great chief. His people are cannibals."

As they rode out of the village, towards the river, nearly the entire populace gathered about. The *alcalde* and *presidente* wore a troubled, anxious expression, but they did not relent. Juanito rode by them with a haughty look. With one backward turn, he again displayed the mighty totem, and figuratively shook the dust of their village from his garments.

Their route lay about a day's journey across the table-land into a rougher region. Their horses, refreshed by their tarry in the Indian pastures, were frisky and sympathetic; while the mule, freed from her pack and bearing on her back only the *arriero* and a pair of saddle-bags, kicked up her heels and brayed her delight loudly and often. Everything seemed auspicious, except for the predictions of the *alcalde*. They were travelling lightly, but were heavily armed; each one having a belt full of cartridges about his waist, a carbine and a revolver. Even the *arriero* carried a revolver, of which he was so proud that he had it slung from a broad strap over his shoulder, where everybody could see it, and where the sun could glint the bright nickel trimmings on the butt and barrel. In a fight, he would rely, of course, upon his trusty *riata*, for he could lasso a man, or a wild animal, going at full gallop, and drag his victim to the ground without checking speed; but a *riata* was not half so imposing as the revolver, and did not bestow such an air of distinction.

The trail grew rapidly worse, becoming, finally, only a narrow foot-path, which had hardly ever been trodden by any save the barefooted Indians and their dogs; but their gallant horses were sure of foot, and with their noses to the ground safely bore them through every perilous passage.

Emerging upon a narrow reach of plateau, John (who was ahead) was about to avail himself of the opportunity for a gallop, when the *mulero* cried out. He reined in the impatient mare, who danced about in this direction and that, fretting, and won-

dering what the delay could mean. The *mulero* pointed out to him a long-tailed bird, with long and slender legs, and a sharp beak, which looked like a very large cuckoo, and which was industriously collecting something from amongst the cactus plants.

"I see it," said John, impatiently — "a *chachalaha*; why should you detain me to look at him?"

The *arriero* pointed beyond the bird, and there, coiled in the trail, was a large rattlesnake. It was apparently asleep; John pulled out his revolver,



THE TORTILLA-MAKER.

but the *arriero* held his arm. "Wait," he whispered, "wait and see the serpent die; *la chachalaha* will attend to him." They retired a pace, swung themselves off their saddles, and waited. Meanwhile, the curious bird had kept on with its employment, collecting the spiny leaves of the prickly-pear, which it carried toward the sleeping serpent and laid in a row around it. Its intention was apparent; it was building a barbed fence around the snake!

Almost breathlessly, they watched the process. It seemed almost human, in its gratified air of

responsibility, as it quietly walked to and fro, nipping off a leaf and setting it in position, jerking its long tail here and there, and bobbing its head about with a sidelong glance at its audience.

Finally, the prickly fence was built; the bird walked around it noiselessly, stopping every gap, then hopped over to peck the snake on the tail with its sharp beak, quickly skipping back again and retiring to a safe distance to watch the effect. Thus rudely disturbed, the rattlesnake seemed at first disposed to coil up more tightly for a spring; but it changed its mind and started to crawl away. Then it saw the spiny hedge. It moved in another direction, only to encounter the same prickly wall. It seemed furious with rage, apparently realizing its position; but made a dash at the hedge, which met it with a thousand barbed darts; these not only entered beneath its scales, but penetrated its mouth, when it bit at them in its fury. Hopelessly involved in the trap, the serpent turned upon itself and dealt a deadly wound with its own venomous fangs; which event the *chachalaha* had seemed to expect, for the bird walked off with an air of satisfaction.

The *arriero* wagged his head. "*Es demonio*," he said; "that is the bird of the evil one."

They went on, halting at noon by an *arroyo*, near which was an Indian hut, where a woman with naked arms was grinding corn on the *metatl*, for the corn-cakes, or *tortillas*, for her family.

She was surprised at sight of strangers, but quietly offered them *tortillas*, and signed them to enter and be seated. She spoke a different tongue from their friends of the valley, and Juanito said she was one of the *Mixes* — the cannibal people, against whom the *alcalde* had warned them.

She was the only Indian they saw that day, until mid-afternoon, when two runners, stalwart young men, came upon them suddenly out of a ravine, and stood before them in the trail. They held out a piece of paper, which explained that their friend, the *alcalde*, had relented, and had sent them as guides.

"The totem has done its work," said Juanito grimly. "It has made itself obeyed."

The guides took their places, in advance of the horses. They had been able to overtake the horsemen by threading the foot trails through the ravines, which were shorter than the bridle-paths. They led on into a cañon, where mighty walls rose up on

either side, and the path was precariously narrow and steep. The sun was rapidly descending behind the jagged crest of the cordillera, throwing a flood of golden light against the eastern wall of the cañon and glancing athwart the gray plains above. The quail and the *chachalahas* were calling, each to its kind, and seeking their night shelters.

The gloom of the great ravine deepened every minute, and still their guides beckoned them on. As they reached a curve of the ravine where it was wide enough for their horses to walk abreast, Juanito called a halt.

"Let us stop," he said, "here is as good a place to camp as we shall find. I like my back to this great wall."

The cliff shelved back a rod or two, leaving a broad platform, over which it impended, completely sheltering them from above.

"A good place," declared Juanito, "which we can easily defend, should the cannibals conclude to attack us. Now let us off with the saddles, and barricade the approach from the path above."

"But wait, Juanito. Do you see our guides? They have lighted torches; they are at the mouth

of a cave. Can *that* be the way into the mine?"

The Indian lad went on a step: "*Si*, they are beckoning to us. I will go to them; let the Little Master wait here, and have his hand on his rifle."

Juanito leaped across the ravine, which carried a rumbling stream away and away into unknown depths. He climbed on over a mass of broken rock until he reached the hole in the cliff where the Indians had halted. By the light of the torches, he closely scanned the face of the rock. Without a word to the guides he returned to John.

"No, *señorito*," he said, "that is not the main entrance to the mine; possibly it is a side gallery. The vast heap of broken ore shows that it has been brought here. 'How do I know it is not?' Let *el señorito* remember again the totem. Yes! It was a red serpent. The tradition of my family says that the red serpent is painted at the mine's mouth — on the rock. This rock bears no serpent. But it is near, *amigito mio*; it cannot be far; every trace is here of ancient mines. Put by the rifle, and let us prepare a camp. But look! back on the trail. Who is creeping down the rock? *Dios mio!* Get behind me, *señorito!*"



MONTEZUMA'S GOLD MINES.

BY FRED A. OBER.

(Author of "The Silver City.")

CHAPTER XI.

THE SACK OF GOLD.

JOHN sprang to his feet. He looked in the direction whence they had just come. But he saw nothing; neither evidently did Juanito after that first startling apparition. Gloom and darkness settled down upon the place; not even a shadow crossed the trail.

The boy rubbed his eyes, and looked inquiringly at the Little Master, with all the superstition of his race in his stare. "Surely, *señorito*, I saw him — the shade of our enemy, coming down the path."

John shook his head with a laugh: "It must have been your imagination, Juanito; you saw that which you most feared to see!"

Juanito assented, but with a half-reservation; the vision was sufficiently clear to make him determine to sit up all night on guard. The Indian guides came back and crouched by the fire that the *arriero* kindled. "*Oro*," they said significantly to Juanito, but nothing more. They seemed indifferent whether the strangers entered the mine or not; they had pointed it out to them.

Without giving their halting-place too much the appearance of a barricaded camp, the young men managed to pile up the saddles and other things so as to obstruct the trail leading down, and spread their blankets beneath a shelving rock that protected them from above. John, though on the eve of his fortune, perhaps involving fabulous riches, was asleep in five minutes. After his strange experiences among the treasures of the Silver City, the awe which historic mysteries inspire could not affect him as at first. But Juanito was sleepless. He expected a subtle attack. He distrusted, too, the guides. He turned over the leaves of the old Spanish book and wished he could read.

But morning found them safe. Just as the sun gilded the cliffs, they crawled from beneath their shelters and went down to the stream to bathe.

Coffee was made, and then, after explicit directions to the *arriero* to await their return, and to keep an eye constantly upon the horses, they armed themselves with carbine and revolver and followed the stream up the cañon towards its source. Their guides indicated to them that they should enter the hole in the cliff. But Juanito refused, and the Indians followed after, loading themselves with their provisions, coils of cordage, and torches of pine wood.

Everything had pointed (the night before) to a close proximity of the mine; but both the young men felt averse (for some occult reason) to entering the passage pointed out by the guides. For nearly two hours they tramped through the rock-ribbed cañon, sometimes in the stream, again climbing over slippery rocks and clinging to narrow ledges. At last they reached an opening, an amphitheatre-like basin, where vast heaps of scoriæ and broken rock indicated to John's eye another vent of the mine. They examined the great cavernous fissure carefully. Suddenly Juanito leaped aside with an exclamation of joy. A red serpent was painted on one of the stones of the lintel. The boys looked at each other with strange sensations, and then proceeded to curiously examine the totem. It corresponded rudely, but surely, with the red serpent on the old parchment Juanito wore on his heart.

But the morning was well-nigh spent; and they entered the tunnel with little delay, the cool cavern receiving them at once, as into another world — a world of darkness, in which they groped their way following the Indians with their smoking torches.

The tunnel, or drift, was so high they could at first walk in it upright. They passed several lateral drifts (called *cruceros*) which indicated to John a mine of great magnitude. The torches lighted the path in an uncertain way, and they were constantly stumbling upon one another. Still the Indians tramped on towards the heart of the mountain. Barefooted as they were, their shuf-

fling footsteps were hardly audible. Suddenly John's foot struck against an object that gave out a metallic sound. He stooped and picked it up, calling to the Indians to bring their torches. Juanito quickly detected through the rust the gleam of copper. He pronounced it an Indian axe or chisel. This, after much rubbing, it was shown to be; a primitive cutting-instrument such as the Indians made centuries ago.

"A good find," said John, "for copper axes and coins were reckoned part of the tribute from the province of Coaticamar. We must be near the head of the drift."

As he said this, they stumbled over a low mound. This upon examination proved to be a heap of those same copper axes mixed with many other objects of a different shape. There were stone hammers, gouges and chisels, made of fine serpentine rock, with their edges polished to a point, and some curious knives of obsidian.

At sight of them, their thoughts quickly reverted to the request of the good magistrate of Minatitlan. "Bring me an axe of bronze," he had said. "And he shall have it, too, the best there is here," said John; "and a nugget added — if we find one." Here, then, were the tools of those primitive miners; their axes and knives of bronze — or hardened copper — and flint, and their hammers, mauls and wedges of stone. With but these simple tools those patient laborers of past centuries had penetrated the rock to this great distance, in pursuit of the glittering veins and pockets of gold.

A few steps farther they went on, and then were abruptly halted by a wall of rock directly across their path. "As I thought," said John, "this is the end of the main adit; and no gold yet in sight. These torches give too little light. Let me examine the walls with my lantern." He flashed the light of the bull's-eye upon the rock, tapping it occasionally with a hammer. Suddenly he called out: "Here, Juanito! Come here, and pound with all your might."

He had discovered a fissure that seemed to lead into an opening beyond. Under Juanito's sturdy blows, the crumbling rock yielded; the hammer broke through and fell out of sight into darkness. John flashed in his light, and then drew back with an exclamation of wonder, and passed his hand over his eyes, as though dazzled.

Juanito eagerly peered in. Without a word he

recovered his hammer, and went to work again with redoubled vigor.

While they were thus at work the Indians sat unconcernedly upon the mound of copper axes. They were wholly indifferent, apparently, to the exciting scene before them. They seemed to think it a part of the programme that the "great man from over the sea" and the "little brother from the coast" should find what they sought. John marvelled at their indifference, and said as much to Juanito, who replied, that there was little to wonder at in their behavior; that they had, all their lives, been accustomed to obey the head man of their town without question, and to look upon the acts of those above them as in every way satisfactory.

"Now let *señorito* look into this *bolsa* — this pocket of gold; there it lies, in a glittering heap, winking and blinking at us like living eyes."

"*Una bolsa de oro*" — a pocket of gold — as Juanito termed it; but it seemed to John rather an accumulation by the hand of man, than a deposit by nature's processes. The young man was at a loss to account for it; he had heard of caves and pockets of pure silver; but never of gold, in this shape and condition. Juanito assented that there was no doubt the Indians themselves had placed it there, for the gold was not in that condition of the metal when found in mines originally opened. There were nuggets and *pepitas* — or kernels of gold, and fragments of golden ore, as it had been cut out of the vein; all heaped together in this little cavern, lining it like the sparkling crystals in a geode.

"There must be thousands of dollars here," said John.

"Thousands! No, millions! *Millones*; *señorito* is a millionaire — *un millonario*!"

"If I am, then Juanito is," assented John.

Juanito shook his head: "No, I am not yet ready to be rich. Let *señorito* give me enough to free my people, to provide for them while they live; the rest is *señorito's*. *Vaya!* let us get it out."

With a calabash, furnished by the Indians, Juanito, as the willing servant of the Little Master, scooped the golden treasure into a leather sack. "Ah!" he murmured admiringly, as *pepitas* and nuggets rolled into the sack, "ah! what a fortune has Juanito found to-day. More gold than

all his people ever had; more than Señor Torres, *el rico* of Yucatan! More even than the great Malinche ever saw! And it was all heaped up by the Indians, hundreds of years ago; all their toil was for the enrichment of *señorito*," he went on talking rapidly in the most excited manner as he worked. "Better so than that Cortez should have had it; or even Coatehlicamar. *Señorito*, I think the poor miners hid this here for themselves, expecting to keep it. And why did they not carry it away? Perhaps they were slain; perhaps they were called out to fight the soldiers of Montezuma. Perhaps



"AHEAD!" JUANITO COMMANDED.

— ah! look at the gold! There! now we have nearly all; it is an empty pocket, now. But I cannot lift it; we shall have to call the Indians. Two of them can hardly carry it!"

John stood, hardly hearing Juanito, deeply plunged in thought, lost in contemplation of the past; asking himself whether the gold belonged to him, or to the Indians; vaguely recalling pictures of the barbaric miners that once toiled here; naked, with rude implements. Here, virtually in his own ownership, lay the result of their labor for many, many years, which they had wrested from the

secret places of the earth with toil, and blood, and groans. The old scruples, the old yearnings for the uplifting and good of the native race of owners, took possession of him, as in the treasure-vaults of the Silver City. He could not look upon this gold as treasure-trove.

Juanito seemed to divine his thoughts. "Gold is good!" said he; "and it is better in the hands of *señorito* than of these Indians. These many, many years, it has been awaiting *señorito's* arrival; not to take it now would be offending the great *Dios*, who made the earth and the gold hidden in the earth. Had they needed it, could they have used it, they could have come any day and carried it all away."

But John's thoughts went back and back; to his New England home; to his patient mother, whose faith in him and in his future was so strong; to his unfortunate father, whom he had been the means of reuniting to the family; then he thought again, with a romantic regret, upon the renounced possibilities of his life in the Silver City; there, he had hoped, lay his life work; there he had found a conscientious primitive people, living in ignorance; he had hoped to guide them to a life of worthy industries and enterprises. He had in his mind an ideal kingdom under the sway of the lovely Princess Hia and her brother. How rudely he had been wrenched away! And now among these simple people of the hills, a similar opportunity opened. He inclined strongly to stay among them. Perhaps, too, some day, when her brother no longer needed her, he would again set sail for Cozumel and penetrate through the country of the Sublevados and again reach the Silver City, and bear the lovely princess away, and bring her into Mexico, where the peaceful people of this golden country should accept her as their queen, and together they would spend their lives in elevating their subjects. Although not a strict believer in special providences, he yet saw the means divinely sent for accomplishing a mission truly divine.

A voice broke in on his romantic reverie: "*Vamos, señorito*; let us go; it is getting late."

The Indians assumed the additional burden of the sack of gold, and turned their faces in the direction of the mine's mouth. They shuffled along with heavy tread, their spluttering torches faintly lighting the path behind.

In half an hour, they had reached the first of

the lateral galleries, a dark hole yawning in the left-hand wall — the second they had passed coming in. Here their guides paused, set down the sack, and motioned them to examine the rock. They broke into exclamations of astonishment and joy; for it was gold-bearing quartz, milk-white, streaked with golden threads. These lines of gold led downward into the recesses of the *crucero*, or cross-gallery, indicating beyond a doubt that richer deposits lay beyond.

"Stay you here, Juanito, with our treasure, and I will examine this ledge." John lighted the dark lantern again, which he had reserved in case the torches gave out. But Juanito demurred; he did not approve of the Little Master going in alone; there might be any number of dangers.

"But, Juanito," laughed John, "I shall merely trace the *echada* — the dip of the ledge — to find if the gold continues. I will be gone not more than half an hour."

Juanito gloomily acquiesced.

"*Vaya, con Dios, señorito.* — Go, and God be with you, Little Master; but Juanito likes it not. If *señorito* does not return in one half-hour, I shall seek him; my heart is full of fear."

He threw his arms about John's shoulders and clasped him tightly, then released him. And as John took up his rifle, and adjusted the lantern to his belt, he besought again, "Have a care, beloved master; look well to your rifle and revolver; caves and mines are the lurking-places of *ladrones* and bandits; remember Juanito's vision of last night; it *may* not have been his imagination!"

John laughingly assured him that he had no fears; then disappeared, the twinkling of his light revealing his presence only a little way. Then Juanito sat down with the Indians, who, as soon as John had gone, crouched by the sack, and began to chat together. They talked with unrestrained freedom, as their conversation was in their own language, of which they assumed the stranger to be ignorant.

One of them took out a pouch of tobacco and some corn husks and began to roll a cigarette, in which occupation he was joined by the other.

"The sack is heavy," said the one who had lighted the match.

The other assented.

"Much gold."

"Much."

"What will the great man do with it?"

"Who knows?"

"What will the hairy-faced man say about it?"

"Who knows?"

Juanito, already excited, thrilled coldly at mention of the "hairy-faced man." Whom else could they mean than Tomaso? He grasped the loquacious Indian by the arm, who merely shrugged his shoulders, and calmly smoked. "Was the hairy-faced man the one the *alcalde* had placed in the calaboose?"

No surprise was manifested that Juanito had understood their Zapotec. They answered unmoved. Yes, they thought he was the same.

"The Spaniard, short of stature, with gray beard?"

There was no doubt of it.

"Where is he now?"

"Who knows?"

"What did he say to them?"

"Nothing."

"Where did he go?"

"Into the *crucero*!"

"Was he alone?"

"He was alone."

"Come, then," cried Juanito, "come with me into the *crucero*; there is no time to lose!"

They deliberately lifted their torches and prepared to follow him.

"Ahead!" he commanded.

They moved in, Juanito following. They evidently saw no reason for haste; but Juanito urged them to their utmost speed, fuming over their delays, choking with grief at thought of what might happen before he could reach *señorito*. He knew that in the Indians he had neither allies nor enemies; they would remain neutral, whatever happened. He longed to shout, but was afraid to lest that should precipitate the Spaniard on his friend. And Juanito knew enough of Tomaso to be sure that he would kill the Little Master, out of pure malice, even if he himself were certain of being shot in the act. In doubt, in grief, every second of time weighted with horror, Juanito crept after the Indians, with eyes and ears alert to catch the slightest sign of life ahead, the faintest sound. They turned an angle of the passage and there they heard signs of life; soft footsteps, and the click of a hammer — John tapping the gold-bearing rock. At the same time there was the twinkle of a light — assurance

of safety. But, just as Juanito was about to relieve his agony by a shout of joy, a dark form darted across the lane of light, and a muffled fall was followed by a death-like silence.

CHAPTER XII.

FATE REPEATS.

Walking carefully along, alternately glancing at the path before him and at the wall of the cut, John had progressed but slowly. The *crucero* was narrower than the main gallery, and not so high; it was also tortuous and rough, as it followed along the gold-vein in its windings, ever twisting and zig-zagging about like a great petrified golden serpent. It was like following an ever-unwinding thread, deep and deeper into the centre of the earth, and he became so fascinated and absorbed that he thought no longer of the surmised dangers of the cut. Wondering at the sight that every succeeding footstep unfolded, he lost himself in speculation as to the reasons of the ancient miners for boring out this long tunnel and, apparently, leaving the real vein untouched. It was all a part of the mystery surrounding the mine. Perhaps, as Juanito had suggested, all this had been done as merely preparatory, and that war—unexpected and disastrous—had come upon the tribe, causing them to withdraw all their miners to fight in the field. Again, it might have been their manner of storing their wealth; leaving the rich veins exposed, ready for the chisel when the gold should be needed. As the time had never arrived, or, owing to some disaster, the gold had not been disturbed, it existed now as in that remote age when first brought to light, firmly cemented within its walls of quartz.

A feeling of awe took possession of the lonely investigator as he advanced downward, guided by the golden clue. It would not have seemed strange if the ancient Aztecs had appeared to demand of him reasons for his intrusion. He shivered at this suggestion, as though a cold draught had struck him, and looked around. In the opposite wall was a cleft—a hole that seemed to descend into the very base of the mountain where it had its foundation walls over the abyss of the terrestrial fires. He turned his lantern in that direction; suddenly, and as it lighted up a little space, he fancied that a shadowy form, having human semblance, and with

baleful eyes, retreated slowly into its recesses. But it did not reappear, and he laughed softly to himself: "This peering into dead men's treasure-vaults has shaken my nerves."

Had he but thrown a light, at intervals, behind him, this story of his search might have had a different termination. For the formless shade emerged again from the cleft, and followed silently on his track; it neared him—by thrusting back with his rifle John might have touched it; nearer it drew, suddenly assuming concrete shape, and showing, in the brief glimpse as John suddenly again looked backward, a terrible form with hand lifted above his head.

"Tomaso!" This one cry only, as the hand descended, weighted with the iron bar it held, and John fell.

It was at this juncture that Juanito turned the angle in the cut and witnessed the final act in the dreadful pantomime. He at first knew not whether it was friend or foe that lay silent on the rock, friend or foe that darted across the space into the lateral chasm. But he sped forward, rifle raised. All seemed void, in the darkness, as he reached the cleft; but a noise of rattling stones sounded within, and he discharged his rifle after it. The noise ceased, swallowed up in the report and its thunderous reverberation. Before it had died away, another report followed, this time from *within* the crevice, and a bullet bounded against the rock behind Juanito.

The Indians, with their torches, had arrived upon the scene, and had illumined the group so that the hidden bandit had had a fairer mark than his foe. But Juanito was unharmed; and he rapidly sent a half-dozen revolver-shots into the darkness.

As the last echo of the reverberations died away, retreating further and further into the drift, Juanito fancied he heard a groan, or an imprecation—he could not distinguish which. Then all was quiet.

Turning now to the silent shape in the *crucero*, the boy motioned the Indians to lift John carefully. They turned him over, and raised him, so that the torch-light flared in his face; it was still and pallid. An intense longing possessed Juanito to clasp his brother close in his arms, and bear him upon his own breast into daylight and open air. His heart burned with the pain of repressed emotion; his eyes were dry, but a-fire with mingled grief and anger. The Indians, unmoved as ever, obeyed him,

gathering the Little Master into their arms, and retreating with him towards the main drift of the mine. Detaching the lantern from John's belt, Juanito re-lighted it and fastened it to his own. Then he slowly retreated after the Indians, his back to them and his face to any concealed foe. His was a most perilous position, for the lantern-glare showed his movements; but it also projected a broad lane of light towards the supposed point whence the enemy might appear. Thus they fell back, in good order, towards their only known avenue of escape.

As they retreated, when a rod away from the cleft in the wall, something seemed to emerge from it — a shapeless something, yet to Juanito's eyes having the general outline of a human being — and danced across the drift and back again.

Bang! the rifle-roar again filled the cavern; Juanito was amazed. He cared little for anything living in the flesh, and was prepared to take any odds; but this phantom-like apparition through which his bullet sped and caused no harm — what should he do? Still he was battling for more than one life; and he resolutely quieted the superstitious suggestions that thronged his brain. He had still twelve shots left; in his rifle six, and six in the revolver which he had reloaded.

Meanwhile, the sad procession slowly moved along. Following after it, as though drawn out by a draught of air, before Juanito's burning eyes trooped a constantly-increasing number of the formless ones — dun, misty shapes. They danced in the gloom beyond the lane of light, never emerging clearly out of the obscurity, but pressing upon one another and constantly shifting places, in restless pantomime. Despite his courage, Juanito felt his limbs shake and his heart thump tremulously. He gazed more in awe than horror. "*Santa Maria!* These are Indians, the old miners, who have perished in the mine. They would not harm me, an Indian of Malinche's own race. Why did I shoot?"

Suddenly, like the drifting away of a cloud before a breeze, these phantoms disappeared, dissolved into the gloom of the cavern. The retreating group had reached the main drift, and here they halted, to gain strength, before carrying their insensible burden on to the cave's mouth. "The gold — what should they do with the gold?" the Indians questioned dumbly.

Juanito shook his head: "Never mind the gold; bear the master quickly out to open air."

The Indians reassumed their burden. As they stooped to take up the unconscious form, their quick ears caught a sound of approaching footsteps. They signed to Juanito. It came from the direction of the outer world, not from the *crucero*.

Placing the Indians with their charge behind a projecting rock, Juanito covered the light, and awaited the coming of whatever caused the sound, crouched close to the wall, with rifle tightly clasped. Louder grew the murmur, swelling to a muffled roar, and betokening many footsteps, as well as voices. Now lights gleamed. He shouted: "*Hola!*" "Who are ye?"

Confused cries, but in friendly tones, answered him, as of several voices at once replying to his call. The next moment joyful exclamations issued from the new-comers, greeting Juanito and the guides, followed by lamentations over the body of *el Americano*; for they were Indians from Tamaulapa, headed by the *alcalde*, who had sallied out in search of Malinche's kinsman, superstitiously drawn perhaps by the red serpent of the ancient totem.

They embraced each other eagerly; and then willing hands volunteered to relieve the patient guides, and the retreat was at once begun. In due time, the entrance to the mine was reached; daylight greeted them; the setting sun fell slantwise across the cañon wall. A terrible weight seemed to roll off Juanito's shoulders as they emerged; but the cloud in his brain still hung there, like a veil before his eyes. Had it all happened in one day? Yes. Between the rising and the going down of the sun, he had passed through a lifetime (it seemed to him) of joy and fear.

They bore the body to the stream and bathed the still face and hands, and washed the clotted blood from the wound; but, though the breath of life was still in him, John did not return to consciousness. Then they prepared a litter and began their march homeward, taking turns as carriers until the rolling river was in sight, the hamlet in the orange grove was reached, and they halted in front of the *cabildo*, where a bed was quickly prepared, and the *medico*, the native doctor, sent for.

Four days of intense agony passed by, during which John neither woke nor gave evidence of sensibility. During all this time Juanito remained by

his side, watching with unresting vigilance. But one morning at dawn, as the wrens in the thatch were twittering softly together, John opened his eyes. It was a simple thing for one to do, yet it startled Juanito more than that shot from Tomaso's revolver, in the mine. "*Graciàs á Dios!*" he presently exclaimed, "Thanks to God! *señorito* has awakened from his sleep!"

The pale lips moved as though trying to form words. Juanito placed his ear down close.

"Tomaso? I dreamt I saw Tomaso!"

The sun hung straight over the hut when John awoke again. This time his glance was untroubled; he recognized the faithful Juanito, and returned his delighted caresses with heartfelt fervor.

"Juanito *mio*, how long have I been here?"

"Five days, *señorito*."

"The gold — did Tomaso get that?"

"No; the *alcalde* has it, keeping it for you."

Long and many talks followed, day after day. Among other accounts Juanito told of the formless phantoms in the mine, which John at once assured



"AND THE LITTLE CHILDREN SANG THE ANGELUS."

"Not here, Little Master; he is in the mine. The *alcalde* thinks him dead."

"What did he do to me?"

"He escaped, and followed us; he struck you down, in the *crucero*, and I — O, *señorito*, he will never trouble us again."

"Our friends, the Indians — they were not false?"

"No, *amigo mio*, they were true; you are back in their town."

Lips and eyelids fluttered again, but closed, a sigh of peace heaved the weak breast, and the tired questioner dropped back into slumber.

him were but shapes of rifle-smoke. Of far more importance were certain conversations with the *alcalde* and the *presidente*. Meantime, his recovery went surely on. Not a man, woman or child in the village but lent a hand and brought a gift to further his convalescence. Everything which could add to his comfort or tempt his appetite appeared in the *cabildo* as by magic.

One beautiful balmy day, about a month after the adventure in the mine, the beloved *el Americano* rejoined the people by appearing at the door of the *cabildo*. By Juanito's aid, he walked slowly through the orange grove, to a verdant knoll, surrounded

by a ring of palm and fruit-trees. A busy scene there met his gaze; the men of the village were building a house. Its frame was already up, some of the workmen were plastering the walls, others laying the thatch of bright palm-leaves, and all were hurrying, as though working in anticipation of some joyous event. It was a beautiful situation for a dwelling, with an emerald slope reaching to the river and a view bounded only by the distant cliffs.

John admired, and praised. "Who is this palace for?" he asked. "Do you expect a *cura* to be settled among you?"

The alcalde laughed, and made answer: "No, *señorito*, not a *cura*, but a teacher;" then he translated the question to his neighbors, who suspended their labors that they too might enjoy it, and indulge in a chorus of laughter.

A week later, the house was done; a broad veranda distinguished it above all the rest, and it was the grandest structure in the village. Hammocks (woven by the busy fingers of Indian maidens) were hung in it; trees and flowers were planted around it. Then the people assembled about the *cabildo*, clad in their best and brightest garments, their faces eager and joyous. Suddenly, there broke forth the sound of singing voices; white garments gleamed beneath the glossy-leaved orange-trees, and up through the avenue of palm-trees came a score or two of children chanting in their native tongue a delightful song of greeting.

The alcalde led them, brought them to the doorway in which the young men were standing, awaiting the simple ceremonies of which they had been apprised.

"Most noble *señor*," he said, "and Little Brother, ours, behold your people, come to conduct you to your home."

They had brought the beloved white stranger their choicest offerings; their love and loyalty. John accepted their trust with unfeigned joy, feeling that a new life had begun, that his life-work lay well-defined before him. Nor did it bear any

longer a relation to the gold mines of his search. The gold lay before him, but it seemed valueless. He looked upon it with an Arcadian indifference.

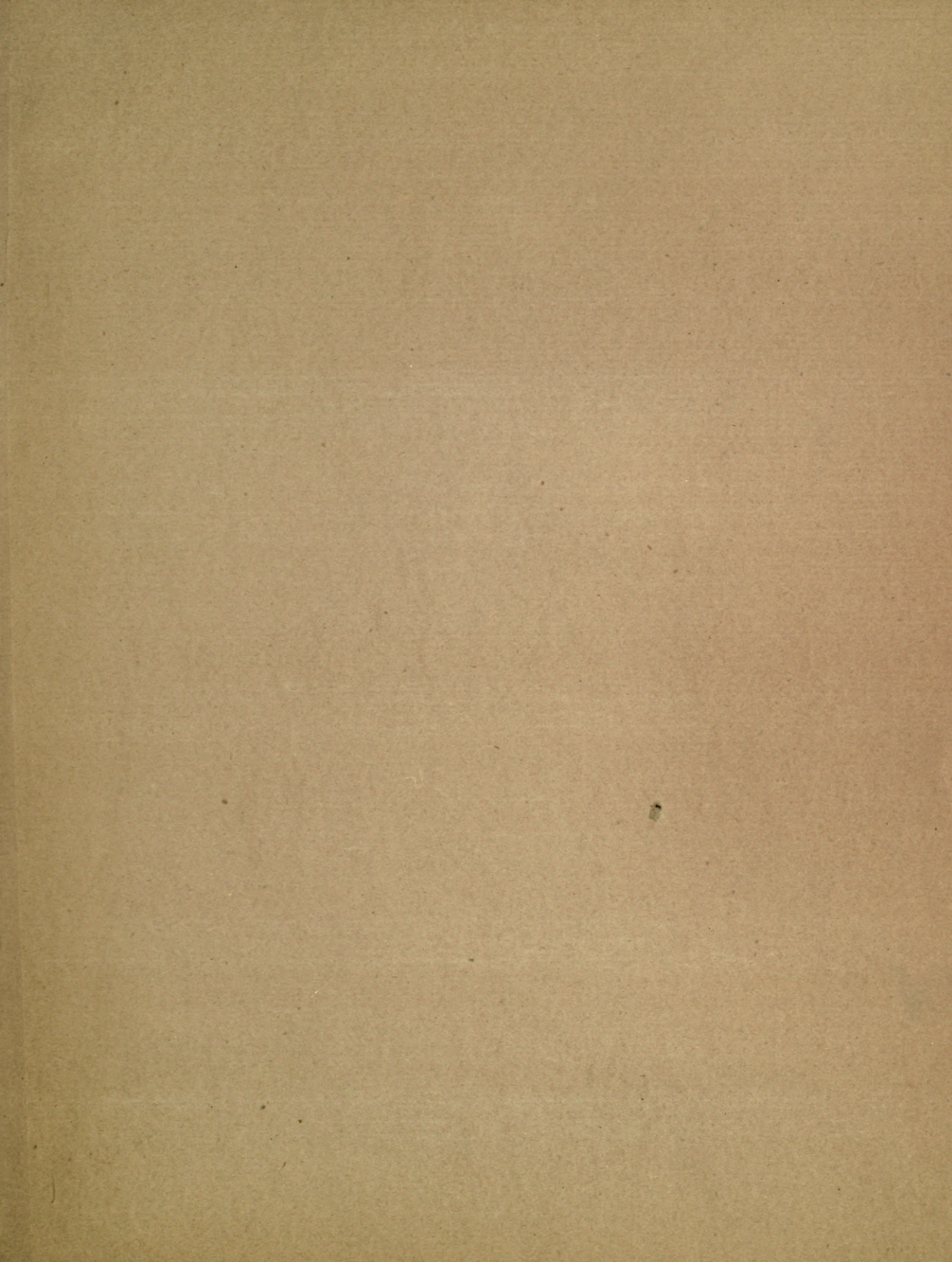
"We believed you would stay with us, even as you promised," the alcalde went on, with simple dignity. "We believe you will find us people good to dwell amongst. All we have we now lay at your feet; only remain with us, and teach us the wisdom of the East, the skill of your race, its learning and its religion. Our Little Brother, after his separation of generations, has at last rejoined his kindred. He is content to stay, and for his mother, his brother, and his sister. We have sent swift runners to Tuxtla with gold to ransom them. Soon Juanito shall welcome them to his home."

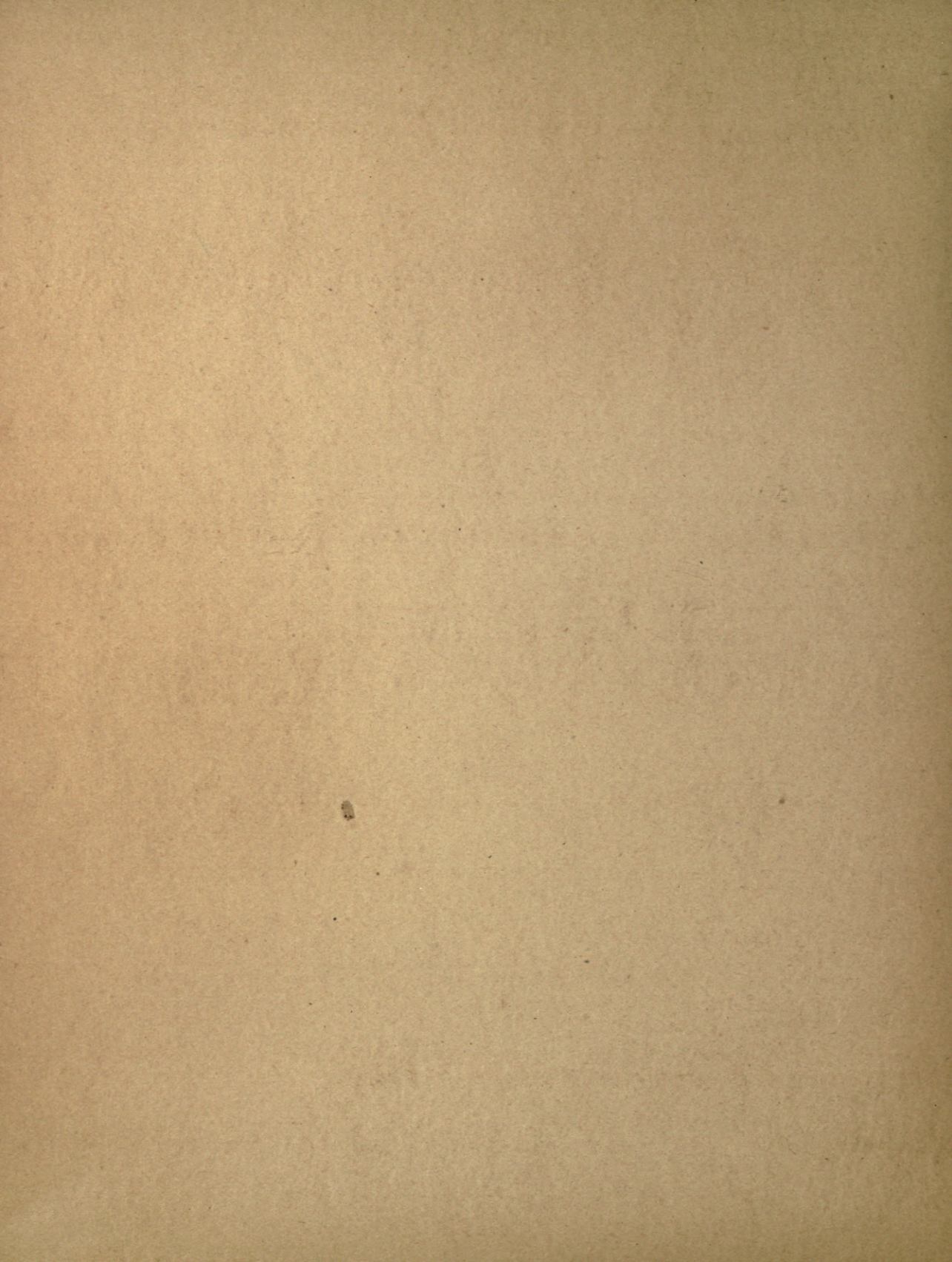
Gratitude and gladness shone in the eyes of the two young men as they turned toward each other. Surely their search for the Lost Mine had been blessed. John swore in his inmost heart that Montezuma's gold should never be put to ignoble use in this, his little ideal commonwealth. The thirst for gold, the toil and strife for gold—how pitiable, how dark and bloody and terrible this gold-hunger had made the history of earth and the human race!

The alcalde led to the new house, all the people following, singing the glad hymns of their race. In the centre of the village, a stone's throw from their new dwelling, were the ruins of a church. Once, fifty years ago, it had stood there fair and stately, its stone tower hung with bells, and reaching upward toward the sky.

Now, it lay in heaps of ruins; for an earthquake had one day shaken it—shaken it for but a moment—and it no longer bore the semblance of a church. But in a corner of its walls, beneath a roof of thatch, its bells still hung. And here, as the dusk of night drew nigh, came the old sacristan (self-appointed) and rang the chimes for the *oracion*, while little children gathered round and sang the *Angelus*—their evening prayer. Then starry darkness and sleep fell upon the peaceful village, and the happy dwellers in it.

(THE END.)





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